United Nations A/50/PV.5

General Assembly
Fiftieth Session

Official Records

5th plenary meeting
Monday, 25 September 1995, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Diogo FREITAS do AMARAL . . . . . (Portugal)

The meeting was called to order at 3:15 p.m.

Address by Mr. Armando Calderón Sol, President of the Republic of El Salvador

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of El Salvador.

Mr. Armando Calderón Sol, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of El Salvador, His Excellency Mr. Armando Calderón Sol, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Calderón Sol (*interpretation from Spanish*): At the outset, in addressing this distinguished Assembly, I should like to express to you, Mr. President, our sincere congratulations on your election to conduct the proceedings of this fiftieth session of the General Assembly. We are assured that with your qualities as a statesman and your diplomatic skills, we shall achieve very constructive results for the well-being of the international community, especially at this most important time when we are commemorating the fiftieth year of the existence of the United Nations.

We should also like to congratulate His Excellency, Mr. Amara Essy, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, for the excellent work that he carried out as President of the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session.

It is both a timely moment and a pleasure to highlight the extraordinary and indefatigable performance of the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, at the helm of the United Nations. He has demonstrated outstanding leadership, dynamism and innovative skill in improving and strengthening the Organization's capacity for action in fulfilment of the provisions of the Charter and of efforts to find solutions for the diverse and complex situations which have faced the Organization.

We would like to reaffirm our special gratitude to the Secretary-General for his ongoing support in the process of consolidating and strengthening democracy in El Salvador.

The current session of the General Assembly is particularly important in the historical development of the United Nations, not only because we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of an exceptional institution of universal scope, which was established to analyse, debate and seek solutions to problems of common concern to mankind, but also because current circumstances lend themselves to reflection regarding the future of our Organization.

95-86076E (E)

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Indeed, we have at this time a unique opportunity to reaffirm our commitment and our political will to strengthen the role of the Organization, to enhance its effectiveness in achieving the ideals on which it was founded, to bring to fruition the aspirations of our peoples, and to preserve the right of future generations to live in peace, progress and freedom.

Undeniably, this is a year for reflection, one which will enable us to assess carefully a half-century of development and experience acquired in addressing global issues through joint efforts and collective measures on a multilateral basis, taking into account not only the achievements but also the set-backs, with a view to further perfecting this human endeavour.

The work of the United Nations, as a part of the international system established in the wake of the Second World War, reflected the antagonistic nature of international relations during the cold-war period, which generated tension and insecurity for nations, unleashing an unbridled arms race and the threat of a nuclear conflict between the super-Powers. This was no doubt a key factor in shaping, and limiting, the work of the Organization.

As we make our assessment, we must acknowledge that since 1945, despite the existence of the cold war, the United Nations has achieved much, *inter alia*, in the following spheres: fulfilling its mission to establish and maintain international peace and security, containing local conflicts in various regions from spreading and at the same time creating a safety valve for East-West tensions, which prevented a political and ideological conflict from degenerating into a widespread confrontation or into nuclear warfare.

Another achievement, in accordance with the Charter, was the decolonization process by which many Asian and African countries, and some on the American continent, gained independence and joined the community of nations, thus enriching the Organization by their experience and contributions.

In this regard, the United Nations has also helped to foster international cooperation. To this end, an institutional infrastructure was developed to promote economic and social development for our peoples through the establishment of a new international economic order, one that would generate more favourable conditions and opportunities for the developing countries to make progress, thus setting in motion a process of evening out the major imbalances between North and South.

While these efforts contributed to improving social conditions in the poorest countries and in countries that had recently gained independence, certain perceptions and attitudes led to a development crisis in the 1980s, curtailing the activities of the United Nations system in the least developed countries.

Turning to the realm of human rights, considerable progress was made, beginning with the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December 1948 and the adoption of a host of international instruments, declarations, plans of action and institutional machinery for the promotion and monitoring of international commitments on the part of States. These include the promotion of the development of women, the rights of children, the handicapped, minority groups, indigenous peoples and migrant workers, and, in particular, a commitment to the struggle to eliminate racial discrimination in South Africa, which culminated in 1994 with the establishment of a democratic and multiracial system in that country.

In the field of international law, outstanding progress was made in the drawing up and codification of international standards, in particular those conducive to friendly relations among peoples and to the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

The thoroughgoing changes in the world order that led to the end of the cold war are giving rise to the expectation of more favourable conditions for the promotion of peace, cooperation and international security. None the less, reality has shown that these aspirations have not been met and that, on the contrary, changes in the international system created conditions that have unleashed forces that had long been held in check, giving rise to new conflicts and rivalries, not only as a result of resurgent nationalism but also as a cause of serious ethnic, religious, social and cultural differences which have jeopardized peace and international security.

In this context, we are convinced that at the present time finding solutions to age-old and new challenges is beyond the capacity of any one State or group of States. This has generated new requirements in the global political area, requiring to resort more and more frequently to combined efforts and action. The very dynamics and requirements of this process have in turn increased the tasks and responsibilities that fall to the United Nations.

For this reason we must provide unwavering support to the efforts of the United Nations to fulfil its role, not only in the political sphere but also in the economic and social areas, particularly through innovations and new perceptions in peace-keeping and the promotion of development.

Regarding efforts at global peace-keeping, it is important to note the new dimension of these peace-keeping operations, whose action transcends the military aspects, moving into multidisciplinary activities that include political, economic, social and humanitarian endeavours.

As regards development, we welcome the fact that more attention has been paid to economic, social and environmental issues, with an understanding that their solution requires coming to grips with, and attempting to find solutions to, the causes of tensions, instability and conflicts with greater political will. As such tensions can go beyond the very borders of nation States, we must lend our support to an integrated approach, for only in this way can we consolidate peace, security and democracy, both nationally and internationally.

Proof of the will to improve the well-being of nations and assist in their progress can be seen in the major summit conferences that have been held, as well as in the formulation of the Secretary-General's development programme. These efforts serve as examples of a new global vision to achieve a consensus on policies and strategies to promote sustainable human development. None the less, we cannot but be concerned at the statements made by the donor community regarding the drying up of funds for development. This is certainly against the general expectation of support for the development of our peoples.

Today, the United Nations has different, and more complex, responsibilities than those it had in a bipolar world. Although the purposes and principles that inspired the United Nations at its inception still remain valid, none the less political situations and the complexity and magnitude of the challenges we face require clear and innovative responses.

In the face of these challenges we must be both determined and prudent, resolved to be advocates of change, learning from positive experiences and willing to replace those outmoded practices that impede the smooth functioning of the Organization.

We believe that the modernization of the United Nations should be carried out through a comprehensive process of an integrated nature which would reflect a consensus deriving from the common interests and shared responsibilities of the international community.

In this respect, we believe that there should be a more dynamic, better-coordinated relationship between the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, one which requires, as the Secretary-General himself stated, "the determination and the full commitment of all Member States". The industrialized countries bear a special responsibility in this task, given that with their capabilities and resources they can provide the Organization with a broad and assured financial base which will make it possible to enhance its effectiveness in every sphere.

In this connection, we urge the Heads of State and Government of the seven industrialized Powers to put into practice the statement of intention they made at the twenty-first Economic Summit, held in Halifax, Canada, in June 1995. We call on those countries, along with others, to implement a new strategy for international cooperation in order to rise to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The reform of the Security Council falls within the process of change in the Organization. We support the idea that the Council should adjust to the new international structure, not only regarding the number of its members but also regarding its methods and procedures of decision-making.

The Government of El Salvador supports an increase in the membership of the Security Council on a rational basis which will make its more truly representative and, as a result, afford greater opportunities for participation by all Member States, without in any way undermining the efficient implementation of the tasks assigned to this important body by the Charter.

Furthermore, we support all those nations which aspire with legitimate right to becoming Members of the United Nations and invoke the principle of universality enshrined in the Charter of the Organization, without taking into consideration ideological aspects or the interests of States which carry greater political weight in the concert of nations. In this respect we share the views expressed by you, Mr. President, when in your opening address to this session of the General Assembly you said that

> "all States that are not yet Members should seek to be admitted in the near future" *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 1st meeting, p.22)*

I should now like to refer to some specific issues that are of particular importance in the international political arena.

With respect to nuclear disarmament we support full compliance with the commitments contained in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which was extended indefinitely last May. We are convinced that this constitutes a major step towards the strengthening of the control system for nuclear non-proliferation and the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

We are fully convinced that preventive diplomacy in its various manifestations is the appropriate instrument for deterrence and the limitation of potential conflicts. In this respect we concur with the statement by the Secretary-General in his latest report presented to the General Assembly that

> "it is ... better to prevent conflicts ... than to undertake major politico-military efforts to resolve conflicts once they have broken out". *(A/50/1, para. 585)*

We support his efforts to enable the United Nations to carry out a constructive and timely role so as to avoid or mitigate the destructive effects of crises.

I should now like to express a regional point of view and note with satisfaction that Central America has moved from an era of confrontation to one of cooperation. We are now embarking on a stage of constructive achievements which has enabled us to move forward in our quest to consolidate a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development. This new stage results from our having assumed our historical responsibility with determination, given the legitimate aspirations of our peoples, who clamored for peace and the democratization of our societies. With the assistance and solidarity of the United Nations and the international community we are achieving these objectives, which will be completed when the process under way in Guatemala concludes with a firm and lasting peace agreement, which has the decisive support of our Governments.

Now that we have made significant headway in the political sphere we are focusing our efforts on the social sphere as an indispensable ingredient, in the conviction that peace, democracy and development are essential components for the flourishing of our society.

Given this undeniable reality, the Central American Presidents have been meeting together to exchange ideas and experiences so that jointly, with a sense of solidarity and coordination, we can rise to meet the ever-more-complex challenges that face us as a result of the process of political, economic, social and environmental globalization which characterizes the new world order. An example of this was the signing of the Treaty on Central American social integration, which took place at the presidential summit held at the beginning of this year in the city of San Salvador.

Moreover, we are pleased to inform the Assembly that in the past 12 months we have held meetings at the highest level in Guacimo, Costa Rica; in Masaya, Nicaragua; in Tegucigalpa, Honduras; and in San Salvador, the capital of my own country, during which we adopted critical decisions for the future of our peoples. We defined our priorities in a new regional agenda which was given concrete expression by the signing of the alliance for sustainable development. This embodies both a strategy and a coordination of interests and responsibilities with legal harmonization and emphasis on investment in the social sphere, as we recognize that human beings are the pivotal point and the principal subject of development.

The breadth and magnitude of the objectives spelled out in the new strategy for development exceed the capacities and resources of our countries, and we believe that the international community can contribute generously towards bringing these strategies to fruition.

In this context we ascribe particular importance to the strengthening of the newly revamped Central American Integration System (SICA) which has assumed as one of its main responsibilities the promotion and implementation of the new Central American agenda. May we urge the Assembly to extend the observer status we have applied for to this new organization, SICA.

We can affirm that Central America has now entered a new era in its history characterized by ongoing cooperation among our countries, as reflected in our efforts to create the conditions which will overcome the obstacles which have done such damage to the cause of integration, so that we can move forward steadfastly towards the unification of Central America.

In this connection we are particularly pleased at the recent progress made during the binational Honduras/El Salvador Commission meeting with a view to complying with the border demarcation arrangements guaranteeing the rights of the inhabitants of the border zones on both sides simultaneously.

In the specific case of my own country we can give a categorical assurance that in the three years since the signing of the peace agreements, El Salvador has moved forward in a constructive way. The commitment of the Government is firm and unswerving in its determination to harness the requisite strength to build a new country, a modern, democratic El Salvador, in which all the sectors of Salvadorian society will participate without discrimination.

After more than a year at the helm I am pleased to state that my Government is fulfilling the promises contained in the inaugural address which I delivered to the Salvadorian people on 1 June 1994. We have been duly following up the peace agreements conceived by the entire nation as a commitment and as an essential prerequisite for moving forward without any possibility of backsliding as we build a peaceful society.

During the period of transition from war to peace and national reconstruction we have devoted ourselves to consolidating the pacification process in the conviction that that is a task that must be shared in a responsible manner among the entire population. That task involves not only finding a solution to the immediate problems created by 12 years of armed confrontation, but in addition, providing a comprehensive response to domestic problems, for only thus can we guarantee that the process will be irreversible and capable of meeting future challenges in a society of stability and peace.

Concerning pending commitments under the Peace Agreements, we acknowledge realistically and in a constructive spirit that there have been problems, and hence delays, in complying with some of those provisions as a result of the highly complex nature of the process. Those difficulties have been overcome through dialogue and consensus among the sectors responsible for implementation. This has enabled us, with the assistance of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador, to alter the established time-tables and to agree on a work programme for the definitive completion of those commitments.

We can affirm that we are complying in a responsible manner with the implementation of the Agreements, but if for logistical reasons some components were still to be pending on 31 October next, given that our determination to comply with those commitments remains steadfast we would request the Secretary-General to extend the residual United Nations Mission in El Salvador.

Our responsibility as a Government goes beyond compliance with the Peace Agreements, for we must provide a comprehensive response to our national problems. Hence, with an awareness that lack of opportunity in our society leads to frustration and despair, creating tensions and conflicts that jeopardize the peace process, we have made additional efforts to implement an ambitious economic plan to develop our society, taking as our goals the betterment of human welfare, the systematic alleviation of poverty, and priority attention to health and education, in addition to promoting productive employment and generally meeting the basic needs of the population, especially its most vulnerable sectors that have traditionally been denied the fruits of economic and social progress.

We are pleased to report that our Government has assigned the highest priority to the maintenance of macroeconomic stability through the implementation of a consistent and coherent set of monetary, exchange-rate and fiscal policies. This has enabled us to achieve specific economic targets, namely, the maintenance of a stable exchange rate, the reining in of inflation, the elimination of our fiscal deficit and the reduction of public expenditure, which has been redirected to social investment and basic infrastructure.

Our Government is fully convinced that if we are to enjoy sustained medium- and long-term growth it must be based on an efficient and competitive productive sector, both domestically and internationally, and to that end we have adopted the requisite economic policy measures.

Among these I would mention in particular the programme to reduce tariffs on the import of capital goods, inputs and raw materials; support for further development of the Central American Common Market; the creation of instruments to facilitate and provide guarantees to foreign investors; decisive support for programmes to enhance the competitiveness of the domestic production base; the promotion of small and micro enterprises; the development of intensive job-training programmes; and the implementation of our

national environment strategy as a component of sustainable development in El Salvador.

To achieve those objectives the entire population of my country is striving to overcome resentment and antagonisms between different social sectors and thereby helping to foster the conditions for national stability with a view to consolidating peace, strengthening democracy and securing economic and social progress.

The successful example of El Salvador clearly demonstrates that a Member State of the Organization, acting in good faith, with transparency and political will, can overcome situations of severe conflict, principally through the efforts of its own population but also with the timely assistance of the international community.

Today, following this exceptional effort to achieve peace — an effort that is, indeed, still under way — El Salvador is a country that has learned major historical lesson. Foremost among them is the knowledge that within our national community we share a common destiny and that within the international community all major undertakings are shared. Learning from those truths, the challenge facing us all is to build a more human world for the benefit of present and future generations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of El Salvador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Armando Calderón Sol, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Derycke (Belgium), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus, His Excellency Mr. Uladzimir Syanko.

Mr. Syanko (Belarus): First of all I wish to congratulate Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral on his election to the distinguished post of President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth, jubilee session. I am sure that his personal and professional qualities will serve as a solid guarantee that during this particularly important session the United Nations will achieve new concrete steps in its search for ways to meet the complicated challenges facing humanity.

I wish to express our gratitude to his predecessor, Mr. Amara Essy, and to the Secretary-General of the Organization, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

We are proud that Belarus was at the origin of the creation of the United Nations and became one of the founding Members of the Organization, having signed the Charter of the United Nations at San Francisco. That honourable right was a testimony to the international recognition of the contribution made by the people of Belarus to the defeat of fascism during the Second World War, the homage paid to the millions of Belarusians who gave their lives in the struggle for liberty and of the right of the Belarusian people to exist as a nation with its own history, culture and future.

Emerging from the ashes of the Second World War, the United Nations has experienced the most serious crises and conflicts, the cold war and *détente*, considerable changes in the political map of the world and the break-up and formation of unions and blocs of States. The Organization has coped creditably with these challenges. Thanks to the United Nations humankind, for the first time in its history, has acquired the opportunity to live for half a century in peace. The contribution of the United Nations to the process of the peaceful settlement of many conflicts is well known. One of the most important achievements of the United Nations is that the world has rid itself of such odious phenomena as apartheid and is close to a complete eradication of colonialism, another no less odious remnant of the past. It is also appropriate to note the role of the United Nations in elaborating and adopting universal documents in the sphere of human rights, as well as in establishing the supremacy of international law.

The hopes and expectations of the peoples associated with the United Nations are convincing evidence of the important role of the Organization at this stage. The tasks that the United Nations is facing today seem to be much more complicated than those of the past, when they were dictated by the pernicious but understandable logic of confrontation. Today it is necessary to solve the challenges of the future world order; and this implies the necessity to reform the United Nations system. Reform of the United Nations, including that of the Security Council, one of its principal organs responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, is the

watchword of the day, and is in many respects an extremely complicated matter. But each State can and should make its own contribution to the formation of the renewed United Nations. This will enable the Organization to reflect the diversity of the contemporary world, the interdependence of States, the equality of great and small and the security and development of all. The reform of the United Nations should result in a more effective Organization as a whole. The reform of the Security Council may be carried out only on the basis of a reasonable increase in the membership of the Council, with strict respect for the principle of the equitable geographical distribution of additional seats among all the regions of the world. The Belarusian delegation is convinced that the allocation of an additional seat for a non-permanent member of the Council to the Eastern European regional group is fully justified and will ensure a new, emerging balance of interests.

I am sure that the United Nations will be able to adapt itself fully to the present realities, as well as duly to respond to the demands and foreseeable global challenges of the twenty-first century.

Among the most serious problems the world community is facing nowadays are regional conflicts. Such conflicts are not a new problem, but in their present dimensions they represent a new challenge for the United Nations. We are fully convinced that, in striving for their settlement, the United Nations should not yield to the temptation to use military force to accelerate the process. Peace-keeping and peace enforcement are two different and in many respects exactly opposite methods, and not links in the same continuing chain of crisis resolution. We consider it very important not to go beyond the limits to violence and ruthlessness that are incompatible with the nature of the Organization.

Our delegation notes with satisfaction the progress made in the settlement of the Middle East conflict. We believe that the continuation of the direct dialogue between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) will finally lead to a comprehensive solution providing for respect for the right of all States of the region to live in peace within internationally recognized borders. We deeply regret the terrorist acts that are periodically carried out in the region and which considerably hamper the peace process. Such acts must be severely condemned.

The Balkan conflict is of special concern to us. The present developments in this region are fraught with the risk of large-scale military activities in Europe.

The unresolved conflicts within the post-Soviet territories are still acute.

From this lofty rostrum I should like once again to emphasize the unequivocal renunciation by Belarus of force to solve existing problems and the need to search for ways to settle conflicts peacefully by political means.

This leads me to the conviction for the necessity of further strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and European regional and subregional organizations and agreements, especially the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Belarus stands for the broadening of interaction between the United Nations and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) not only in the sphere of conflict settlement on the territory of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), but also in the fields of disarmament, protection of the environment and the eradication of terrorism and organized crime.

Against a background of heightened confrontation in some regions of the world, one cannot but rejoice at significant achievements in the consolidation of international security. We welcome the adoption by the 1995 Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of the historic decision on the indefinite extension of the Treaty. Belarus has been and remains a supporter of the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime. That is why our country, having clearly determined its position at an early stage, became a sponsor of that draft decision.

At the same time, it is necessary to remember that the decision on the indefinite extension of the Treaty was adopted as a package. It envisions the strengthening of control over the implementation of its provisions and the realization of the approved principles and aims of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. It is a duty of the nuclear-weapon States to confirm in practice their adherence to their obligations. The most important criteria of such adherence, in our view, are further progress towards nuclear disarmament, a comprehensive ban on nuclear tests and the inclusion of positive and negative security assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States in an instrument of international law of binding character. Belarus confirms its non-nuclear-weapon status and is determined to implement the provisions of the Agreement on the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from its territory in full and on time.

I am pleased to inform delegations that at the beginning of this year the Belarusian Parliament ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction. We call upon all signatory countries to the Convention to ratify it as soon as possible, and we again declare our support for the comprehensive ban on chemical weapons.

Belarus has always believed that, next to nuclear disarmament, the limitation of conventional weapons is of enormous importance for the consolidation of international peace and security. In this connection, I should like to touch upon the problems concerning the fulfilment of our obligations under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.

Having assumed obligations under a Treaty in whose elaboration it did not participate, Belarus has been guided by the wish to assist in the consolidation of European and international security. From the very first days of the implementation of the Treaty we spent a considerable amount of resources on its implementation and on the creation of appropriate structures and industrial capacities for the elimination of huge stockpiles of armaments and equipment produced not for Belarus, but for the then super-Power, the Soviet Union. But as time passed it has become clear that for the young Belarusian State the elimination of those weapons was a burden beyond its strength. Therefore, we appealed to our Western European partners for assistance.

For a long time our appeals were unanswered, which led us to suspend the elimination process temporarily. That decision was made due to a lack of financial resources, and had nothing to do with issues of global and regional policy.

I am glad to say today that an understanding of our problems has recently begun to emerge. Our reaction has been immediate and fully adequate. As is known, the President of Belarus has declared that our country is resuming the elimination of conventional weapons in accordance with its obligations under the Treaty.

I would also like to point out that, by special Presidential Decree, Belarus has declared a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land-mines for the period from September 1995 until the end of 1997.

Our Republic attaches paramount importance to the development of international cooperation in the economic, social and environmental spheres in the interests of the sustainable development of all countries. In this context, we attribute special significance to the series of world forums held under the auspices of the United Nations in Rio de Janeiro, Vienna, Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing to consider problems in such spheres as those of the environment, social issues, population and human rights, and to search for ways to solve them. It is important that the decisions and recommendations of these forums be duly taken into account and efficiently utilized in elaborating "An Agenda for Development", which is to determine the avenues and the programme of human development for years to come.

We stand for the inclusion in this document of substantive issues related to economies in transition, a notion which would fully reflect present realities. Belarus takes a profound interest in supporting United Nations system-wide activities to promote the integration of these countries into the world economy. We are sure that, in today's world, such an integration is advantageous to all and in the interests of all.

In this connection, I should like once again to recall the Belarusian proposal — supported by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its third session and approved by a decision of the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session — to convene in 1997 an international conference on the sustainable development of countries with economies in transition. This proposal, once realized, would be an important contribution to the preparation of the special session of the General Assembly in 1997 to review the implementation of the agenda for the twenty-first century. Belarus places ardent hopes in cooperation and interaction to implement this initiative, first of all with the European Union, the European Commission, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and other European regional and subregional organizations, as well as with interested partners. We also hope that the United Nations Development Programme and the Economic Commission for Europe will provide their competent assistance in preparing and convening the conference.

One of the most important directions of the activities of the reformed Organization is, in our opinion, the development of economic dialogue within the framework of the United Nations aimed at the exchange of experience, the strengthening of the multilateral trade system and facilitating non-discriminatory access to world markets. In this connection, we consider that the speedy granting of membership in the World Trade Organization to our country would testify to a fair attitude towards a

founding Member of the United Nations with an economy in transition.

One cannot but note that, in countries with economies in transition, the effectiveness of tackling social problems is directly linked with the fate of democratic reforms. The new economic and political conditions in which these countries find themselves require large-scale economic transformations and the social adaptation of all population groups. Without effective international support, the achievement of this goal would be delayed for an indefinite period. It is for this reason that Belarus is interested in continuing all programmes initiated by the Organization in the social sphere.

The promotion of universal respect for, and the protection of, human rights and fundamental freedoms is one of the goals stipulated in the United Nations Charter as well as an important component of international security. At this jubilee session, it is appropriate to note that significant success has been attained in this field since the inception of the Organization half a century ago. The undisputed achievement of the international community is the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the consistent implementation of which will be conducive to securing universal respect for justice, the supremacy of law and human rights. Unfortunately, the path to full implementation of human rights is strewn with many obstacles which, in our opinion, are raised by imperfect social relations rather than by a lack of will to exercise these rights.

We are convinced that it is high time today to think of, and act for, the benefit of tomorrow not only by strengthening in every possible way the mechanisms of protection of human rights, but by taking concrete measures to study and expand the list of fundamental universal and categorical human rights.

For more than nine years now, the Belarusians have been living under the conditions of an ecological disaster — that of the Chernobyl nuclear-power plant catastrophe. The Republic spends annually more than 20 per cent of its national budget to mitigate the economic, ecological and medical after-effects of the Chernobyl accident. But most horrible is what is happening to the health and psyche of the people. The incidence of thyroid cancer in children has increased manifold. The birth rate has fallen 50 per cent since the period preceding the accident. Genetic diseases are conspicuously on the rise in the most contaminated areas. As time goes by, it becomes more and more evident that the Chernobyl catastrophe has infringed the most sacred of human rights — the right to life.

We are glad to note the important catalysing role played by the General Assembly and its specialized agencies in drawing the attention of the donor countries and of the international organizations to the Chernobyl problems. As the day of the catastrophe recedes into the past, the nature of the after-effects of Chernobyl also changes, requiring a strengthened role on the part of the United Nations in the development of Chernobyl-related bilateral cooperation. On its part, Belarus is ready to sign bilateral memoranda on Chernobyl cooperation with the World Health Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and other agencies of the United Nations system.

In March 1996, an international conference will be convened in Minsk, with the active participation of UNESCO and the European Commission, to commemorate the lamentable tenth anniversary of the Chernobyl accident. We express our hope that this representative forum will help to step up joint efforts to study the after-effects of the radioactive fallout and make more effective the efforts aimed at mitigating the fatal consequences of the catastrophe, on the basis of the experience accumulated by Belarus.

Finally, the manifold and unfair increase in the Belarus rate of assessments to the United Nations regular budget and to peace-keeping operations — caused by the fact that Belarus, along with the economically most advanced countries, was related to group B — has resulted in the rapid growth of our arrears.

We note with deep satisfaction the special decision to relocate the Republic of Belarus to group C for the apportionment of peace-keeping expenses which was taken during the resumed forty-ninth session of the General Assembly. On behalf of the Government of Belarus, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the delegations of all countries that displayed a spirit of understanding and cooperation during the consideration of this issue. I address my special words of gratitude to the Government of Portugal, whose consent voluntarily to relocate to group B opened the way for the adoption of the aforementioned decision. I am confident that such actions are an important contribution to the governance of principles of justice in the work of the Organization, which in itself is very significant on the eve of its golden

jubilee. For its part, the Government of Belarus, in spite of the utmost economic difficulties, fully aware of the depth of the United Nations financial crisis and sincerely striving to fulfil its financial obligations to the Organization, has decided to transfer about $2 million dollars to the United Nations budget.

In his fifties, a person is no longer at the peak of his physical capacities, but acquires considerable life experience and wisdom. I would like to express a wish that the United Nations, once its 50-year threshold has been crossed, will remain full of strength and health and unsurpassed in wisdom in all its deeds.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, His Excellency Mr. Bjørn Tore Godal.

Mr. Godal (Norway): I wish first of all to congratulate the President of the General Assembly upon his election to his high office in the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. May I, at the same time, extend my sincere thanks to the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, for his excellent work.

Fifty years ago, my countryman Trygve Lie became Secretary-General of an Organization with a very modest structure but with a "sacred mandate", as he said in his acceptance speech,

> "to build a firm foundation for the peace of the world". *(Official Records of the General Assembly, First Session, Plenary Meetings, 22nd meeting, p. 326)*

Since then, even greater demands have been made on the United Nations in terms of leadership, ideas, manpower and finances. On the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary, we must empower the United Nations to work with renewed vigour and effectiveness in promoting peace, human rights, sustainable development, equality, justice and understanding among peoples.

Rather than being poised to take on new challenges, however, the United Nations finds itself in a financial crisis of major proportions. The Secretary-General has recently pointed out that the Organization is, in a technical sense, insolvent — yes, bankrupt. Only prompt payment by a small number of Member States has enabled it to continue to operate. The situation is more serious than ever before because of the unprecedented amounts involved and the fact that one major contributor's payment is being withheld and is expected to be unilaterally reduced in the years ahead.

This desperate financial situation reflects the inadequate priority given to the United Nations by many of its Members, which is in clear violation of their obligations. It may sound harsh, but, coming from a country which consistently pays $100 per capita to the United Nations system, I have difficulties in explaining to my own electorate that other rich countries are not even willing to provide one tenth of that level.

At the same time, I realize that the United Nations assessment system should be reformed without delay. Moreover, experience has shown that the United Nations itself needs to be reformed, restructured and modernized. Norway wholeheartedly supports the reform process launched to strengthen the United Nations system and make it more representative and effective. This should include expansion of the membership of the Security Council and increased transparency of its methods of work.

To meet the twin challenges of peace and sustainable development, the United Nations and its Member States should proceed along five parallel paths.

First, we must help increase local and regional capacity to handle conflict situations. For instance, African countries have signalled via the Organization of African Unity (OAU) that they are prepared to take on a larger share of the responsibility for solving their own problems. In response, Norway will cooperate with partners in Southern Africa in building up standby reserves of qualified personnel for peace operations under United Nations or OAU auspices.

Secondly, more nations must be willing to contribute to the United Nations peace-keeping forces. Traditional troop contributors do not have the capacity to provide all the personnel that will be needed in future peace-keeping missions aimed at solving disputes, protecting local populations and providing humanitarian assistance. Both the United Nations and the traditional troop-contributing countries must assist potential troop contributors with competence-building measures, just as the Nordic countries are now assisting the Baltic States.

Thirdly, the rapid-reaction and standby capability of the United Nations must be improved. Norway is prepared to join in efforts to develop new, much-needed

situations. The rapid-reaction capability must also include humanitarian assistance. The United Nations should continue to play a central role in coordinating humanitarian relief efforts.

Norway has given high priority to measures that enable us to respond expeditiously to requests for assistance. We have established an effective preparedness system for emergency assistance that covers both personnel and *matériel*. Emergency equipment can be airborne within 24 hours. Experienced personnel can be in the field within 72 hours. In Rwanda, a fully equipped field hospital, accompanied by the necessary personnel, was recently delivered at short notice to the United Nations, in accordance with these procedures. With a view to improving the United Nations response to support requirements, Norway has offered to provide facilities for a United Nations medical depot where medical equipment and supplies for peace-keeping and humanitarian operations can be stored and maintained.

Fourthly, we must put even greater emphasis on conflict-prevention measures. The international community must be present in unstable areas and must provide economic incentives, mediation expertise and human rights monitors. Conflict prevention is the most effective way of using limited resources. Norway will continue to shoulder its share of the responsibility — for instance, in Guatemala, where we are actively involved in the peace process, together with the other members of the Group of Friends. Norway has established a special human-resource bank for human rights and democracy, which is able, at short notice, to offer experts to assist countries and peoples in their efforts to build democratic societies.

The international community must be prepared to act decisively when atrocities are committed. Serious crimes should be prosecuted by an international criminal tribunal. The establishment of the ad hoc Tribunals in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda has provided momentum for the efforts to establish a permanent court. The tribunal's role should be limited to cases where national jurisdiction is unavailable or ineffective.

Fifthly, on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary, we call on the United Nations to take a decisive lead in promoting sustainable development and eradicating poverty. Efforts to improve global security must address the issues of economic growth, development and poverty, while ensuring that the use of natural resources is kept within the carrying capacity of the Earth. The United Nations must become a driving force for sustainable development.

The United Nations is the only forum with a mandate to tackle the truly global problems affecting the environment and the sustainable management of natural resources. Let me offer some brief examples. The Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks provided an invaluable contribution to the management of fishery resources. We are also pleased that, just a few days ago, the United Nations Panel on Forests was able to take the first steps to protect, preserve and manage the world's forests in a sustainable manner.

I would like to stress the need for a concerted effort within the United Nations system to ensure that the results from the major conferences in Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing on, respectively, population, social development and women actually become translated into law and realities, locally, nationally and at the international level.

With a growing world population, we have witnessed the spread of the gravest insult to human dignity — poverty. Our inability to eradicate poverty haunts our common conscience. As long as the gap between rich and poor, whether between States or within States, continues to widen, we cannot claim to be on the right track. If we are to alleviate poverty, both donors and recipients must make more resources available for social welfare activities. At least 20 per cent of development assistance budgets and national budgets of recipient countries should be allocated to the social sector.

The conflict in the former Yugoslavia is far from being solved, even though the prospects for a negotiated solution now appear much better than they did until recently. Norway welcomes the agreement on basic principles which resulted from the Geneva meeting on 8 September. The United States of America deserves praise for its persistent efforts in this regard. It is vitally important that the members of the international community, in particular the contact group countries, continue their common approach to the solution of the crisis. In this context, the United Nations and the European Union mediators can make a valuable contribution.

The success of the mediation efforts depends entirely on the readiness of the parties to compromise. We strongly urge all the parties to show flexibility and restraint, and to refrain from attempting to obtain further advantages on the battlefield. Special attention must be

given to displaced persons, who, whenever possible, must be allowed to repossess their homes.

The time has come to start reflecting on the reconstruction of that war-devastated region. This will require a sustained international effort. The United Nations system together with the European Union and others must play a leadership role in coordinating programs in various fields, such as economic reconstruction, humanitarian aid and assistance to refugees, democracy-building and human rights. Local leaders have a heavy responsibility to prevent a new arms race, human rights abuses and the renewal of tensions in the area. Norway will continue to support the process of building peace and prosperity in the former Yugoslavia.

I call on the General Assembly to lend its full and undivided support to the peace process in the Middle East. The new interim agreement is a significant and necessary follow-up to the Oslo agreement. Today we salute once more the Israeli and the Palestinian leaders for their courage and determination. As Chairman of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee to coordinate donor activities, I strongly urge the donors to continue to support — for some donors, to increase their support of — the Middle East peace process by providing economic assistance to the Palestinian people. Our common interest in peace in the Middle East is the best argument for heavy economic support to the Palestinian areas.

Nuclear testing is a threat to our search for common security and to the environment, and should be banned. We deeply deplore the Chinese and French tests, which we fear may complicate the ongoing negotiations in Geneva on a comprehensive test ban treaty. We would once again urge all nuclear-weapon States to refrain from further nuclear testing during the negotiations and until the treaty enters into force.

Land-mines are among the most insidious weapons in common use. They cause indiscriminate and widespread suffering and continue to spread terror for years or even decades after hostilities have ended. We call for a total ban on the production, stockpiling, trade and use of anti-personnel land-mines. In the absence of such a ban, we urge all countries to adhere to the United Nations 1980 inhumane-weapons Convention. No strengthening of the land-mine Protocol will be effective unless adherence to it becomes universal.

Finally, let us seize the opportunity offered by the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations to renew our support for the United Nations and its aims. Each and every one of us must help to ensure that the United Nations becomes what we need and what future generations have the right to expect: an effective tool to harness our strength and unite us in maintaining peace, promoting social progress and protecting human dignity.

The President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola, His Excellency Mr. Venancio de Moura.

Mr. De Moura (Angola) *(spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation):* Permit me at the outset, Sir, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Angola and of my entire delegation that is accompanying me, to express my satisfaction at your election to the presidency of this session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. We are convinced that your excellent personal qualities and the diplomatic skill you have accumulated will guarantee the success of the conduct of the work of this significant session. Your election is also well-deserved recognition of the important contribution which your country has made to the promotion of peace and international security. I assure you, at this stage, of the cooperation of my delegation. We commit ourselves to doing everything to support this arduous but honourable task with humility and a sense of responsibility.

I cannot let this opportunity pass without expressing my appreciation to the outgoing President, Mr. Amara Essy, for the dedication and interest with which he carried out the activities of the Assembly during his mandate. Similarly, I address my remarks to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who has tenaciously done everything, to find the very best solutions for the problems afflicting humanity, pledging to provide our Organization with the dynamism needed to face future challenges.

The fiftieth session of the General Assembly, which coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, provides us with an opportunity to engage in profound reflection on the extent to which we have moved forward towards the realization of its main goals, *inter alia*, preservation of international peace and security, promotion and protection of human rights, and economic and social development, with a view to looking more optimistically and more boldly at the challenges which lie ahead on the eve of the twenty-first century.

In fact, although the changes that took place in the wake of the cold war led to a certain easing in international relations and promoted, as never before, democratic values, the international situation nevertheless has continued to deteriorate in recent times in the political, economic, social and financial spheres. Conflicts of all sorts proliferate, affecting principally the countries of the so-called third world and creating a climate of uncertainty as to the future of humankind.

As we approach the twenty-first century, we face new and greater challenges that will necessitate joint, concerted action by the Members of the United Nations. This will require a new democratic structure in international relations, in the broadest sense.

More than ever before, we need to think about the objectives and role of the United Nations, as set out in the Charter, and focus on that task.

The process of restructuring the United Nations should lead the Organization to an arrangement that reflects the new challenges we face in the world at this time and that would allow for the broad participation of its Members. We are convinced that the present structure of the United Nations — and in particular that of the Security Council — does not meet the present needs of post-cold-war international relations. Apart from the restructuring undertaken in the agencies that coordinate economic and social development worldwide, priority should be given to the restructuring of the Security Council, whose composition continues to be a reflection of the cold war. The enlargement of the Council should take place with respect to the categories of permanent and non-permanent members alike. This will require taking into consideration the need for geographic balance.

We are also in favour of restructuring the methods of work of the United Nations so as to make them more transparent.

Furthermore, it is important to guarantee the effectiveness of the mechanisms and means of ensuring implementation of the decisions of United Nations organs. In recent years, the General Assembly has adopted numerous resolutions, and important global strategies have been defined in various forums under the aegis of the United Nations, aimed at solving problems afflicting all humankind. These problems range from the living conditions of children, the environment, human rights, population problems and social development to, more recently, the issue of the situation of women, dealt with at the Beijing Conference.

The time has come to take action. The unsatisfactory functioning of some of the mechanisms for monitoring the application of decisions and the weak commitment of States have been the root cause of the failure to carry out many of these recommendations.

The world socio-economic situation continues to deteriorate, particularly in the so-called developing countries, where many economies are on the verge of collapse.

Public assistance for development has sunk to deplorable levels. United Nations agencies involved in development have seen their budgets severely affected by the financial crisis, resulting in cuts in numerous programmes that were destined to help raise development indicators in various countries. To give just one example, the annual report of the Secretary-General indicates that the United Nations Development Programme experienced a reduction of $1.4 billion in the period 1992-1996.

Structural adjustment programmes undertaken in various countries have not produced the desired results, leading to reductions in national funds in the social field. These negative factors are cumulative, and added to them is the heavy burden of external debt, whose service alone consumes a large part of the gross national product of debtor countries.

Africa's capacity to repay debt has been negatively affected not only by weak economic structures inherited from the past, but also by natural disasters and internal armed conflicts. In view of this situation, it is necessary to adopt measures that are more just and less prejudicial, so that debtor countries can pay their external debt without hindering their development or requiring further sacrifices on the part of the poorest segments of their populations.

The principal international financial institutions should grant more favourable credit to developing countries, so that the remedies applied to their respective economies will not lead to a deterioration of the health of those economies.

The present international economic order does not favour the economies of the so-called third world. It is thus necessary to have a more just international economic order, without protectionist measures that impede

international business relations and create discrimination against developing countries, the majority of which become sources of raw materials and inexpensive labour and importers of manufactured goods.

The strengthening of south-south cooperation and regional economic integration will, as we see it, be an adequate response to this trend. Countries of the southern region of Africa, to which Angola belongs, have provided a good example of regional integration, both economic and political, by forming the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Given the prospects for total political stability in the region and its economic potential, the region may well transform itself into an important development zone. In the same way we value the joint regional integration between members of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic, of which Angola is also a member.

In successive resolutions the General Assembly has recommended that priority be given to our continent in terms of aid for development, because it is the region of the world that has most suffered the tragic effects of colonialism. But reality shows a significant drop in resources available for development. This aggravates the precarious economic situation of African countries that have no capital and no technology, which increases poverty and makes them susceptible to serious internal conflict.

If, as we have just indicated, it is true that we are witnessing, nearly everywhere, some proliferation of regional conflicts that put peace and international security at risk, it is also true that in Africa these conflicts have reached a level of great danger. Not only is the dimension of such conflicts a source of concern but so is their nature. Its markedly ethnic, racial or religious character is being used to justify intentions which place at risk the unity and territorial integrity of several nations.

The inadmissible genocide that occurred in Rwanda seriously damaged the values of human dignity and tolerance. Above all, it demonstrated the need for the international community to seek new ways and means to eliminate the focal points of conflict and to guarantee protection for civilian populations, the people who are the primary victims of internal conflicts.

In Burundi we are concerned about the deteriorating internal situation. In this connection the international community, and the United Nations in particular, should shoulder their responsibilities in order to help avoid the repetition in that country of earlier events by supporting by every means available the efforts carried out by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) mission with a view to fostering peace and stability.

In Somalia the continuing fratricidal war that is tearing that society apart is threatening the very existence and integrity of the country. The international community, and the United Nations in particular, cannot and should not fail to shoulder its responsibilities *vis-à-vis* the people of Somalia.

We pay tribute to Liberia for the recent developments in that country, thanks to the recent Abuja peace agreement between the warring parties. We hope that this agreement will finally bring lasting peace to the Liberian people.

Concerning Western Sahara, we join our voice to the voice of the international community in urging the interested parties to observe the United Nations peace plan.

Despite its own internal difficulties, the Government of the Republic of Angola is doing its utmost to support OAU efforts within the framework of African mechanisms of prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. In that context we did not hesitate to make a contribution to a resolution of the crisis faced by the people of the Republic of Sao Tome and Principe after the *coup d'état* of 15 August. As the Assembly will be aware, Angolan mediation helped to restore democratic institutions and constitutional order in that country. We have acted on behalf of the historic solidarity which links our two peoples in a common struggle for democratic liberties and respect for the law of constitutional institutions.

Thanks to the support provided by the international community, particularly the Portuguese-speaking countries, along with the European Union, France and Portugal in particular, and of course the Secretary-General of the United Nations, we were able, in a short period of time, to get an agreement between the parties on 22 August last.

The conflict in the countries of the former Yugoslavia is one of the most complex conflicts seen in Europe since the end of the cold war. The Government of Angola is concerned about this conflict. We support the current peace initiatives and hope that the meeting between the parties involved and the mediators will lead

to concrete results, to the satisfaction of the peoples of the region.

The situation in the Middle East has been marked by some important and significant developments since the signing of the agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the beginning of the normalization of bilateral relations among countries of the region.

Such advances are quite encouraging. We are confident of a final end to the Arab-Israeli conflict if we continue to see political will, a constructive spirit and flexibility demonstrated on all sides. Angola has always defended the right to self-determination of the people of Palestine and the restitution of the occupied Arab territories. We here reiterate our support for the peace process that is under way and express our opposition to acts of violence intended to call into question the continuation of this process.

The question of East Timor continues to prick the conscience of the international community. It is necessary to ensure that the people of East Timor enjoy the legitimate right freely to choose its own destiny and that this be recognized. In this regard the United Nations has an important responsibility, which it cannot escape.

We are particularly encouraged by the opening of a dialogue between Portugal and Indonesia. But there will be positive results only if the interests and options of the people of the Territory are borne in mind during the search for a just and acceptable solution.

Angola shares with the people of East Timor a common past of struggle against Portuguese colonialism. We will continue to give our utmost to the search for a just and acceptable solution.

By sustaining an economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba for more than 30 years the United States of America has created a paradox within the reality of our times. The embargo is a set-back to international efforts to eliminate the last relics of the cold war. Angola therefore reiterates its opposition to this unilateral measure, whose extraterritorial impact is in violation of international norms of free trade and international law.

Practice shows that constructive dialogue is the best solution for resolving differences, similar to that which occurred in reaching a solution to the problem of migration between the two countries. We think that it is up to the people of Cuba freely to decide their own destiny.

Obviously, I cannot refrain from making reference to the situation in my own country, which will be of interest to many here. As is known, after long years of war Angola finally found the path to peace, starting with the signature of the Lusaka Protocol and the initial steps taken to implement its provisions. It is an agreement that complements the fundamental structure of the peace process established by the Bicesse Accords, which were signed with the mediation of the Government of Portugal.

Since the signature of the Lusaka document in 1991 and the cease-fire agreed to in November last year, the situation in our country has evolved significantly, despite some negative aspects and obstacles that I shall mention shortly. Major offensive military actions have stopped, leading to the free movement of people and goods in many areas of the country under Government control. We are now seeing the return of thousands of displaced citizens to their areas of origin.

In the political area, a direct dialogue has begun between the Government and UNITA, between His Excellency the President of Angola and Mr. Savimbi. This has facilitated the resolution of many problems related to the implementation of the Accords that were not resolved at Lusaka.

In addition, the Government has taken important steps to strengthen the climate of mutual trust and to make reconciliation possible. Within this context, the Government supported a legislative initiative to modify the Constitution to accommodate the leader of UNITA as one of the two Vice-Presidents of the Republic. That significant political gesture, along with the future integration of UNITA members in a government of national unity, will create conditions for Angolans to enjoy a definitive and lasting peace in a climate of tolerance, free from hatreds or resentment.

Despite those efforts, which my Government views as positive, we continue to be concerned by the excessive delays in the implementation of the peace process, whose most serious issue is the quartering and demobilization of UNITA forces, which has not yet been implemented as it should have been under the Lusaka Accords. This delay has resulted in some serious recent problems and incidents in some regions of the country. Such incidents do not at this time pose a serious threat to peace, but they are capable of creating dangerous focal points of tension

that call into question the trust that is needed for full implementation of the Peace Accords.

My Government would like to take this opportunity to express its gratitude for the work done by the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola. It has by and large assured respect for the provisions of the Peace Accords and has involved the presence of many countries represented here. We believe that the complete deployment of peace-keeping infantry units will make it possible better to control the implementation of the commitments made in Lusaka.

The post-conflict phase in Angola will require urgent measures of a special economic and social nature in order to move the country rapidly out of the state of crisis, to rebuild its productive and social infrastructures and to prevent a return to war, measures which must guarantee the social reintegration of thousands of military personnel, of whom some 150,000 are to be demobilized, and the return of refugees and internally displaced persons who are returning to their areas of origin.

As I speak, a meeting is being held in Brussels between my country and the European Community to come up with an overall plan for national reconciliation. From this rostrum we should like to express our thanks to all countries that have assisted us and to all the United Nations agencies that have made it possible to organize this important meeting, the first round table meeting in Brussels. My Government has entered in earnest on to the task of achieving national reconciliation in our country. As we said earlier, a community rehabilitation programme has been created, in collaboration with the United Nations, to this end. It has a budget of $700 million that will be open to all donor countries in Brussels with a view, *inter alia*, to restoring in the shortest possible time basic production activity in the 18 provinces of the country.

We are aware that the rapid recovery of the Angolan economy will depend largely on our success in implementing this programme and achieving peace and harmony in our country. It is an economy that saw its gross national product and per capita income decrease by one half as a consequence of war. Thus, we would like once again to request the international community to continue to lend assistance to Angola in order to achieve complete peace and reconciliation among all Angolans. We hope that can become a reality.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Iceland, His Excellency Mr. Halldór Asgrímsson.

Mr. Asgrímsson (Iceland): Mr. President, may I congratulate you on your election and express my deep satisfaction at seeing a representative of Portugal, an ally and a valued member of the international community, occupy the presidency of the General Assembly in our fiftieth anniversary year.

Anniversaries are occasions to celebrate past accomplishments. The towering achievement of the United Nations is to have survived through nearly half a century where power relationships often submerged the high-minded vision of the United Nations Charter. Therefore, as we celebrate the half-century of our Organization, we also celebrate the triumph of hope over despair and of good faith over cynicism. At long last, there is an opportunity for the United Nations to come into its own and for the ideals of the Charter to take hold.

At the same time, we must learn from our mistakes. Foremost, in that context, is the tragic conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In spite of the laudable humanitarian and peace-keeping efforts of the United Nations, the Organization has in the eyes of the world appeared incapable of preventing the savage dismembering of a sovereign Member State.

Although we all realize that the United Nations can never provide foolproof insurance against evil and injustice, the Organization must in the future face such challenges in a more resolute manner. We must demand more of ourselves and learn how to use more effectively the indispensable machinery the Organization has to offer. We should also bear in mind that no organization, however efficient, can provide a substitute for the political will of its Member States.

Recent setbacks should, however, not be allowed to obscure the considerable gains, global and regional, that have been made on a number of fronts over the past year. Let me mention only a few.

The march of democracy has continued through the organization of free elections in different parts of the world, and a growing number of people now live under pluralistic and democratic Governments. In recent years, the Organization has contributed to the success of elections in various Member States.

Two major United Nations Conferences took place earlier this year. Each could, if followed up in earnest, make a tangible difference in the lives of people

everywhere. At the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen in March, we decided to place people at the centre of development and to address the problem of global poverty more effectively. At the recently concluded Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, we pledged to empower women and to involve them as equal partners in all spheres of society. Together, women and men can and should create a powerful unity based on equality, development and peace.

In the area of international law, the achievements of the United Nations were once again brought into focus with the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea last November and the adoption in August of the Agreement on the Implementation of the Provisions of the Convention relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks.

In May, a historic step was taken towards ridding the world of the threat of nuclear weapons. The decision by the Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to extend the Treaty indefinitely and without conditions should pave the way for a comprehensive and verifiable test ban and an agreement to cut off the production of fissile material. It is regrettable that China and France have not heeded the worldwide demand for a moratorium on nuclear testing.

At the regional level there have also been welcome developments. While the passage has not been smooth, there has been further progress towards a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. We have witnessed the joint efforts of the Israelis and the Palestinians to bring their conflict to an end, and we extend to them our sincere congratulations on their historic agreement to be signed later this week.

These are substantial accomplishments. They confirm that hard work, guided by the goals and ideals of the United Nations, can bear fruit. More of that same dedication is now required as the Organization prepares to take on the complex challenges of the twenty-first century.

The foremost challenge is the need to establish and safeguard peace. While the threat of nuclear holocaust has receded, we still live in a world riven by wars. Annual military expenditure still nearly equals the total income of the poorer half of the world's population. The peace dividend we had hoped for in the aftermath of the cold war remains for many a sight unseen.

The Secretary-General has rightly observed that there is an inherent link between peace and development. Without the one you cannot have the other. Peace is the necessary precondition for the well-being of all peoples, and in the long run we shall be able to protect ourselves from the scourge of war only if we make the necessary investment in the infrastructure of peace. This involves, among other things, dealing with the legacy of deprivation that still confronts mankind.

The challenge of development will not lend itself to a simple formulation in terms of government versus the market-place. Instead, we must apply a comprehensive framework, linking democracy, society, the economy and the environment, carefully nuanced to regional and local circumstances. Here, the Secretary-General has led the way in his ground-breaking report. Let me dwell on a few aspects of the issue of development that are of particular interest to my own country.

First a word on the role of democracy. Democracies, it is sometimes said, do not make wars. By promoting democracy we also foster peace. This is in part because two of the main pillars of democracy are tolerance and respect for the customs, traditions and opinions of others. But tolerance and respect for diversity must not be misinterpreted. We live in a world of rich cultural diversity, which we should relish and protect. However, multiculturalism should never be used as a pretext for compromising basic and universal human rights.

Iceland attaches continued importance to international efforts to create a global environment conducive to job-led economic growth. But economic growth must never be our sole objective, without regard to human values.

Environmental protection is another main concern. Important strides have been made in this area since the Earth Summit in Rio. Climate change and ozone depletion, two major dangers to the global ecosystem, are now being dealt with on the basis of legally binding conventions. But much will depend on coordinated action to implement the commitments we have undertaken. Furthermore, greater attention needs to be devoted to the marine environment.

Pollution of the marine environment, if not contained, can have a serious impact on human settlements in certain regions of the world, not least communities of indigenous peoples. In this connection,

chemical pollutants in the form of persistent organic substances are of particular concern for entire societies which base their livelihood on the living resources of the sea.

Iceland is firmly of the view that this threat can be countered only through a global and legally binding framework similar to that governing climate change and ozone depletion. For this reason, my Government attaches particular importance to the conference on the protection of the marine environment from land-based sources, due to take place in Washington later this year, and we urge Member States to take active part in this conference.

Marine living resources can make an important contribution to food security in a world faced with rapid population growth. Such resources provide food and livelihood to millions of people and, if sustainably used, offer increased potential to meet nutritional and social needs, particularly in the developing countries, as noted in a recent report of the Food and Agriculture Organization.

For this reason, it is particularly regrettable that close to 70 per cent of the world's conventional species of fish were, according to the same agency, fully exploited, overexploited or depleted, or are in the process of rebuilding as a result of depletion in the early 1990s. Clearly, the ability to satisfy global demand for food from the sea in the coming years will depend to no small extent on the adoption of responsible fisheries conservation and management policies. We should at all times view the ecosystem of the oceans as a whole and harvest all species of this vast but delicate resource in a sustainable manner.

Looked at in this light, the results of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, while by no means the final word on this matter, acquire major significance. Let me point out that the law of the sea has been the sphere in which Iceland has been most engaged, beginning in 1949, when, upon a proposal by Iceland, the International Law Commission was given the task of studying all aspects of the law of the sea. Iceland will continue to be active in the implementation of the Convention on the Law of the Sea.

We live in an era of growing demand on diminishing natural resources. It is therefore to be welcomed that international cooperation is now gradually extending to the Arctic region, breaking at last through the barrier of what the Icelandic- American explorer Vilhjálmur Stefánsson once referred to as

> "the ancient inherited opinions about the terrors of the Frozen North", a "lifeless waste of eternal silence".

The resources of the Arctic are enormous. The nations of the region should develop its potential and work together in the economic, environmental and cultural fields. Therefore, my Government attaches the highest importance to the consultations that have taken place among the Governments of the eight Arctic States to establish the Arctic Council.

We have had intensive discussions on changes in the Security Council, including on whether to increase its membership. Iceland is of the view that the fundamental objective of an enlargement of the Council should be to strengthen its capacity to discharge the duties assigned to it. We believe that there should be an increase in the number of both permanent and non-permanent members. In this context, I would like to express my Government's support for the permanent membership of Germany and Japan in the Security Council.

Reform, however, will avail us little if we fail to come to grips with the serious financial situation of the United Nations. Here, I fully share the deep concerns that the Secretary-General has expressed in his comprehensive report on the state of the Organization. According to their obligations under the Charter, the Member States should pay their contributions to the regular budget in full, on time and without condition. If all Member States do not live up to their obligations, we will be forced to take the inevitable political decision to scale back the activities of the Organization. At a time when the services of the United Nations are in greater demand and when the Organization has a better chance of success than ever before, such a step would be highly unfortunate. Instead, let us put the fiftieth anniversary to good use and make the earnest pledge to put the Organization on a sound financial footing.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua, His Excellency Mr. Ernesto Leal.

Mr. Leal (Nicaragua) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is a pleasure for me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly on this, the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. I also wish to extend our recognition to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and to the outgoing President, Mr. Amara Essy.

We are convinced that one of the most important items of this session must be support for the effective and substantive reform of the United Nations.

Mr. Camacho Omiste (Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The only way to approach the construction of a new international order is by renewing our faith in multilateralism and giving the United Nations its central, indispensable role in the search for lasting solutions to the complex problems that all our societies are experiencing.

Half a century has passed since the founding of the United Nations. With its successes and setbacks, its accomplishments and its problems, the United Nations has shown that only organized international cooperation will make it possible to prevent new conflicts. It is impossible to imagine today's world without this universal institution. The profound changes that have taken place since that era and the demands of the future make it necessary for the United Nations to be renewed, revitalized, reformed and strengthened.

It is valid, then, for us to ask ourselves what the new vision of our United Nations is in a changing, global and interdependent world. The transformation of the United Nations cannot be separated from the profound transformations that democracy itself is undergoing throughout the world. Our Organization must be reformed on the basis of the new conception of democracy.

The concept of democracy in the world has changed. Democracy is no longer a static concept, nor is it limited only to the internal affairs of States. Democracy is a patrimony of values that are common to all humankind. Today's democracy is dynamic, and in order for it to take on a profound character, it should be understood as an unfinished work that is always in transition.

Today I should like to emphasize various aspects of this international democratic transition, which is closely related to the transition that our Organization must undergo.

First, we are moving away from the political agenda and moving towards the social agenda. The World Summit for Social Development, held in Denmark, reminded us that the ultimate objective of all our efforts is to improve the living conditions and quality of life of our peoples. Our Organization was born in the geopolitical era, marked by East-West confrontation and bipolar division. Today we are passing towards a world divided into economic blocs where social policies are demanding their rightful place at centre stage.

Our Organization has the duty to facilitate this transition from a world divided between military Powers to a world where democracy, economic efficiency and social justice crown a new world order.

Secondly, democracy is passing from centralized decision-making to broad participation by citizens in society. In this way we are moving from formal democracy to participative democracy, where power and choice are somehow returned to communities. This transition means more opportunity for dialogue and internal consensus within our societies. As has been said on other occasions, the concept of international peace gives way to the concept of internal peace within our States. Last year the Secretary-General himself said, at the luncheon he gave for Heads of State, that wars are no longer waged between States but, rather, within our nations. That is why it is so important to promote reconciliation and negotiation in divided societies.

Thirdly, we are moving from bureaucracy to good government. This transition requires that special attention be given to the reform and modernization of the State. Efficiency and effectiveness should now be the new terms for public administration.

Fourthly, we are passing from the unilateral perspective that has characterized the world to a focus on gender that opens the doors for the full, active participation of women in the great tasks of our times. Equality and equity between men and women is a basic principle for achieving the true development of international society. In this regard, the recent Conference in Beijing opened up a new chapter for us, leading towards this new goal.

Our Organization also has to assimilate the transition from a partial concept of development to an integrated concept of sustainable development. This new concept requires us to combine the political dimension with the social, cultural, economic, ecological and even ethnic dimensions of development processes.

Central America, a region that emerged into democracy from out of the ashes of war and conflict — a region, as the President of El Salvador, Mr. Armando Calderón Sol, said this afternoon, is going through a new stage in its history — has also adopted a new model of

sustainable development that makes ours the first region in the world to try, through the concrete fulfilment of commitments in all areas, to make a reality of the agreements of the Rio Conference on Environment and Development.

We Central Americans are moving from the model of military security centred on the cold-war poles of power to the new model of democratic security. The United Nations should therefore lead the way in this new concept of security, which is not limited to the military aspect. Rather, human security should be the new axis of this new model of world security.

Today we Central Americans are discussing a treaty on democratic security, developed by Nicaragua, that enshrines this new concept of security, which is no longer based on number and quality of weapons, but, rather, on the quality of human life, the efficiency of democratic institutions, civil security, the fight against drug trafficking, terrorism and arms trafficking and cooperation in all areas. We Central Americans have concluded that democracy and its improvement are the best way to strengthen regional security.

We must be aware that we are also going through a transition to what we call preventive democracy. By this we mean that we should strive to anticipate conflicts and their causes in order not to have to resolve them later with the peace-keeping forces of this Organization. That is why we have always said that the best peace-keeping operation is the one that we can avoid, that we never have to carry out. This also means rechannelling efforts into the area of promoting human rights — no longer treating this subject as a mere list of violations of fundamental rights and freedoms devoting great efforts to the promotion of respect for those rights and human freedoms.

In its reform process, our Organization should also take into account that commerce and investment are ceasing to be merely economic factors; they are becoming a genuine element of support for those democratic processes that demand to form part of economic development. The battles waged before on the battlefield are now waged in international markets. What we must understand is that there, too, a battle for the sustainability, progress and development of democracy is taking place.

We are also making the transition from a world divided between opulence and poverty to one with a new focus on establishing a real alliance for development between the countries of the north and the countries of the south. The era of confrontation should give way to a new era of cooperation directed at reducing the inequalities between a rich and prosperous north and a dispossessed and poor south.

We need to make the transition from an era of inequality of opportunities to an era of democratization of development. By this I mean, at the internal level, broadening the base of the benefits of progress for a steadily growing number of small and medium-sized businessmen. At the international level democratization of development implies sharing the benefits of progress in a more equitable manner between countries.

It is not possible to make a deep revision of the structure of our Organization without looking at the profound changes that have taken place in the world and which are enriching and broadening many of our values, concepts and goals while presenting new challenges.

For this reason it is very important to see that the reform of the United Nations rests on this global renewal of democracy, whose consolidation constitutes the fundamental political priority for the new world order we are all building.

I would like to emphasize here that the new and restored democracies, which met in Managua in 1994, have much to do with and much to say about the future and the values of our Organization. The consolidation of democracy in the societies that lived through the totalitarian doctrines of this century is fundamental to sustaining this new vision of the United Nations.

My country has always counted on the invaluable cooperation of the United Nations to complete a transition process characterized by its complexity. The United Nations has accompanied us on our road from a Nicaragua at war to a Nicaragua at peace; from a Nicaragua divided and without democratic institutions to a new Nicaragua that today enjoys complete freedom. The same United Nations is accompanying us in the process of strengthening the advances made, with the benefits of economic development.

I would like to recall with special gratitude the various resolutions of this General Assembly, requesting Member States and international financial institutions to continue to lend their support to Nicaragua in a wider and more flexible manner, taking into consideration the exceptional circumstances of our country.

Nicaragua now faces the challenge of successfully ending the first stage of its transition process, giving special attention to overcoming dire poverty, to the modernization of its institutions and to the improvement of its productive capacity. Nicaragua is preparing to hold its next elections in 1996, thus taking a new step in the consolidation of its democratic institutions. It is worth recalling that six years ago this Organization, for the first time in its history, participated in observing elections, and that happened in Nicaragua. Today I want to invite the United Nations to participate as an observer again, in these new elections which will mark a transcendental stage in our democratic process.

These challenges make indispensable our continuing collaboration with the United Nations system and with friendly countries in establishing once and for all strong foundations for economic and social development and for a lasting peace. The United Nations still has much to do in Nicaragua.

I would like to refer now to the subject of the reform of this Organization. We need to move forward urgently in the matter of the democratization of the United Nations and all its main organs. In this endeavour Nicaragua fully supports an increase in the number of members of the Security Council, in order to ensure the equitable representation of all regional groups, among the permanent members as well as the non-permanent. In this context, we support the entry of Germany and Japan, countries that we are certain will make a significant contribution to the effectiveness of the Security Council.

We must redouble our efforts to promote administrative and budgetary reforms that will make our Organization more efficient. We consider it necessary to continue with the functional and organizational strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, which should maintain its role as the custodian of the economic, social and cultural rights of Member States.

We cannot speak of reforms in the United Nations without speaking of reforms in the General Assembly. The Assembly must be revitalized, and it should coordinate its activities more closely with the other United Nations organs. The President of the Assembly should be given more specific tasks, in accordance with the new circumstances I have already mentioned.

There can be no reform of the United Nations without a solution to the financial crisis through which the Organization is passing. The continual budgetary problems must be examined in an honest, pragmatic way, since the credibility of the Organization is at stake.

We are convinced that the development programme will be a strategy that is coherent, not only with the new vision of world development, but also with the goals and objectives of the new or restored democracies. It is necessary to have a creative programme for development, with universal validity, which will combine assistance for development, trade, investments, the transfer of technology and a reasonable solution to the problem of the debt and the negative transfer of resources.

One of the fundamental pillars of Nicaragua's foreign policy is general and complete disarmament, nuclear as well as conventional. Nicaragua is therefore concerned about the recent nuclear tests in the Pacific.

Nicaragua is in solidarity with the 21 million inhabitants of the Republic of China in Taiwan, and in this context we call for resolution of the exceptional situation of the Republic of China through peaceful means, in accordance with the principles of the peaceful resolution of disputes between States and within the framework of the creation of an ad hoc committee of the General Assembly.

Nicaragua takes the opportunity once more to salute the courage and determination of the South African people in the achievement of a new South Africa, united and non-racist.

In Mozambique we hope that the process of reconciliation will continue and that, finally, that patient brother country will take the road to economic growth and development.

Similarly, we hope that Angola will consolidate the establishment of a strong and lasting peace, indispensable for national reconciliation and reconstruction.

As regards the Palestinian question and the Middle East, we are pleased with the positive and irreversible evolution towards a just and lasting solution to the conflict. We warmly welcome the recent agreements between Israel and Palestine.

Our country continues to be alarmed by the situation in Somalia, Liberia and Rwanda, and considers that greater efforts are necessary on the part of the international community, and principally of the United Nations, to bring stability and peace to those countries.

In Europe, in relation to Bosnia and Herzegovina, we are worried about the continuation of hostilities and hope for a peaceful solution to the conflict. The Nicaraguan Government greets with approval the Joint Statement and Agreed Basic Principles, signed recently by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Yugoslavia.

To end, I wish to say that today more than ever, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, Nicaragua and the majority of the peoples of the world put our confidence in our Organization, since we consider that the time has come for the United Nations to assume fully its responsibilities under the Charter. Nicaragua is ready, in its current conditions of peace and harmony, to support this new vision of the United Nations, also based on a new vision of democracy.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs, National Security and Attorney-General of Belize, His Excellency the Honourable Dean Barrow.

Mr. Barrow (Belize): There is, of course, a special resonance to the congratulations we offer the President on his election to this high post at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. In this watershed year, his job will be particularly challenging. The delegation of Belize pledges its fullest cooperation in helping to ensure the success of his stewardship.

All the world is conscious of the historic significance of this fiftieth anniversary year. And a lot of work has gone into the process leading up to this session. We also at this juncture, then, express our thanks to the President's predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, and those whose job it has been to supervise and implement the preparatory effort.

If this is a year of celebration, it is also a year of reckoning. Inevitably, the jubilee has concentrated attention as never before on our Organization. Can we withstand the scrutiny we provoke? Is our record one that, on balance, vindicates the vision of the founders? And in a world that is almost unrecognizably transformed since 1945, are we equipped for the changing role the United Nations must now play?

Well over 100 States have come into being since 1945. The myriad issues that now dominate the global agenda are attended by a host of problems. The duties and burdens of the United Nations system have therefore proliferated hugely. Can the United Nations cope? And are we, the Member States, prepared to invest our enterprise with the resources necessary to deal with the new realities.

These, it seems, are the questions most urgently in need of answers.

In thinking of the future, though, we would do well to look at the past. And I would wish briefly now to examine our historical record, highlighting some issues of special relevance to small countries such as Belize.

Just four days ago, Belize celebrated the fourteenth anniversary of its independence. It was an independence long delayed by the territorial claim of a neighbouring country. But it the end it was an independence made possible in no small measure by this Organization and its role in world affairs.

One of the things that in the first place made our aspiration for sovereignty realistic, was the seminal 1960 General Assembly Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. And the United Nations thereafter became our guiding star as we steered our course between the Scylla of the historical colonialism from which we were escaping and the Charybdis of the recolonization that was inherent in the territorial claim.

During the years of our independent existence, this Organization has similarly continued to be a bedrock of our viability. The principles enshrined in the Charter, and the international legal order derived from those principles, have been a welcome guarantee of our sovereignty. The territorial claim has not gone away. But the norms imposed by the United Nations, especially those requiring pacific settlement of disputes among Member States, have at least helped to keep it from confounding our integrity.

Who can doubt that, in one form or another, this salutary experience of Belize with the United Nations has been replicated by any number of small countries? Because of the multiplication of new States, especially since 1960, the international order has been characterized by an unprecedented differentiation in underlying power capabilities between the huge and the tiny. Very weak States can, of course, never seriously hope to influence international behaviour solely through the use of their national power capabilities. What the United Nations has done for us, then, has been to offer a plenitude of sustenance via its many entities and constituent

groupings. In effect, the set of opportunities created by the character of post-Second-World-War international organizations that have been the United Nations and its progeny has made sovereign equality a very real concept, power asymmetries notwithstanding.

For small States, certainly, the political and diplomatic vitality of the United Nations system is a matter of undeniable fact. Nevertheless, the United Nations should continue to enhance cooperation with regional organizations, as it did last session when this Assembly resolved to institutionalize cooperation with the Caribbean Community. Belize was honoured to introduce that resolution.

Likewise, the principle of inclusiveness should be employed to ensure that States in the various regions of the world, including Asia and the Pacific, are not confined to incomplete participation in the international order.

I turn now to the economic sphere. The record of our Organization is, I am afraid, rather less compelling. It is true that various organs of the United Nations system — the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) — have provided small States with an unprecedented forum for the articulation of our concerns. Even now, Belize prepares to assume its elected seat on the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme. But continuing large disparities in wealth between rich and poor countries, the debilitating debt consuming us in the developing world, the unemployment, the persistent poverty, speak volumes as to the absence of sufficient progress on this front.

Since the last general debate, the World Trade Organization has come into being. In the Americas, the Hemispheric Summit is now a matter of record. But we note with regret that, even as liberalization advances, the call of the disadvantaged for special and differential treatment goes unheeded. This is accompanied by the continuing volatility of the international trading and financial systems, and the well-known vulnerability of small countries to external shocks.

For us in Belize, negative economic trends among our major trading partners have had a baneful effect. This, in turn, has served to heighten our concern over the nature and pace of globalization. The structural changes that fragile economies need to make in order to be in step threaten to swamp us. But no one seems to be paying attention.

Perhaps new forms of regionalism are the answer. One arguable example is the new Association of Caribbean States, which will create the world's fourth or fifth largest market area and of which Belize is the geographical centre and the cultural bridge.

Yet it is essential, we contend, that the international community exhibit full sensitivity to the condition of smallness. We remain highly susceptible to changes in the global marketplace; and adverse developments then impose additional setbacks on us in the areas of competitiveness, development finance and overall fragility. For Belize, the recent crisis in neighbouring Mexico, starkly dramatized our own precariousness.

Generally, we think, the impact of the events in Mexico on the markets and economies of other countries serves as a clear warning. It is foolhardy to believe that inflexible social and economic formulas can be applied uniformly to our differing circumstances. Heedless adjustment and implacable time-tables might well condemn small economies to extinction.

Indeed, many of our small countries have already made strenuous efforts at stabilization and reform. We have liberalized trade, reduced fiscal deficits and privatized State enterprises. But where are the rewards? We continue to be overcome by debt, by poverty and by woefully inadequate social and physical infrastructures. And our difficulties are exacerbated rather than solved by the austerities that reduce government spending and curtail our public sector investment programmes.

Time is not on our side, as economic and fiscal orthodoxy bear inexorably down on us. Our constituencies continue to press us: Where is the understanding of our plight? Why is there is no capital inflow revival? What is to be done about the alarmingly high rate of unemployment? When will we see the special mechanisms to assist us with retraining, the moulding of new technologies, and the critically needed human resources development? Can we ever seriously hope for the dedicated financial resources that must underpin any serious effort at diversification?

We are being told that this liberalization advance — this march of the martinets – is the panacea for our ills, but the evidence to the contrary is quite startling. For our domestic producers, for our banana farmers, it is a bitter

joke. Global free trade, it seems to many of us, is like the Holy Roman Empire: not holy, not Roman, not an empire.

The Bretton Woods institutions certainly need to demonstrate more creativity. Their too-rigid reliance on the prevailing orthodoxy is choking us. Democracy in small countries will not be worth a fig if this *auto-da-fé*-type insistence on these articles of faith is not leavened by a real appreciation of our peculiar needs.

It is in this context that we also call for this Organization to promote true global cooperation in efforts towards sustainable development. This shared quest must be the essence of the economic relations and the development dialogue between the North and the South and among the developing countries themselves. My Government certainly pledges full support for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Unit on South-South Cooperation, well exemplified by the Ruta Maya tourism project of our Central America. We also call for support for strengthening the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America, a major initiative for developing what we call our delicate filigree isthmus. And we welcome such relationships as Belize's recently concluded joint implementation pilot programme under the Climate Change Convention.

The overarching goal of our precursors was

"to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

Well, how have we been doing on that score?

In the sphere of peace and security, some grave developments have taken place in various parts of the world. In several places genocidal impulses have been let loose, with predictably devastating results. Paradoxically enough, the end of the cold war has resulted in an upsurge of civil and territorial strife. Fratricidal conflicts have been launched to the drumbeat of overblown notions of history and dangerous concepts of ethnicity. For all the Assembly's efforts, we continue to experience a relative stalemate in Cyprus and elsewhere. The Balkan conundrum still seems intractable, though we note with encouragement that this Organization has recognized that there is a limit beyond which forbearance ceases to be a virtue. Rwanda refuses to go away.

Yet we hail now the breakthrough in Palestine, and we again rejoice at the continuation of peace and stability in South Africa. In Namibia, Mozambique and Angola, the United Nations has assisted, or is assisting, in bringing civil wars to an end.

In my own part of the world, the continuing United Nations partnership with the people of Haiti is consolidating reconstruction and democracy in that Caribbean country. Despite the limitations on our resources, Belize is happy now to be able to play a commanding role in the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) sub-unit of the United Nations Mission in Haiti.

Likewise, the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador is successfully overseeing efforts to cement the newly minted peace. In Guatemala, the dialogue between the URNG and the Government, begun under the auspices of our Secretary-General, is proceeding apace.

My Government takes great satisfaction in the calm that reigns almost universally on our continent, from Hispaniola to Tierra del Fuego. The disappearance of authoritarian Governments in Latin America and the resolution of most of our internal conflicts is bringing liberty and democracy to all our peoples. Our efforts can therefore be committed fully now to the business of fostering economic and social development, human rights and the protection of the environment. As the first-ever Defence Ministerial Meeting of the Americas confirmed, our militaries are fully cognizant of the new role they must play in supporting this process.

We therefore applaud the strong and clear views on nuclear sanity expressed during the Conference on the extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and currently being reiterated. This delegation reaffirms its own view that the parties to the NPT have now invested in the nuclear Powers a trusteeship that those Powers must zealously discharge.

At the same time, we must be equally aware of the other danger: the continued production, trade and use of all types of so-called conventional weapons that harm, maim and kill.

In the context of more general concerns, we cannot escape the overdue obligation to rationalize also the structure of the Security Council, so that the veto is tamed and equity and democratization take centre stage. We continue to insist that all regions obtain balanced and equal representation as permanent members; small countries be brought into the Council's decision- making;

and consideration be given to such devices as multipartite seats or constituency groupings.

One final word on the question of peace and security. The Secretary-General has stressed the multitude of new demands for peace-keeping made upon the Organization as conflicts erupt around the world. The caution has been expressed that the increased burdens in this regard should not displace the attention that economic and social questions demand. Of course, the two are interrelated. It is a truism that there can be no development without peace. We would content ourselves, then, with merely urging that we put in place a more coordinated system to embrace peace-keeping and conflict resolution as well as human rights and social and economic development.

Also, the non-traditional threats to peace and security must be addressed. In recent years we have witnessed growing links among organized crime, drug trafficking, terrorism and the spread of armaments. The dangers from this phenomenon are all the more insidious for being novel. We must therefore quickly develop the international cooperation measures to deal with it.

So, as this Organization completes its fiftieth year, we in Belize are well convinced of its continuing vitality. The jeremiads of those that bemoan its failures are not for us. While we are not going to be Pollyannaish about what is admittedly a mixed record, we see enough to be sanguine about.

There is extraordinary cooperation on the part of States, other political entities and non-governmental organizations in the dozens of areas of substantive concern of the United Nations organs; in the burgeoning, multidimensional sphere of sustainable development; in the territory where humane concerns and values, social ordering and cultural norms coalesce; and in the field of peace-keeping, of providing States and peoples with security from violence and disorder.

Of course there is still a long way to go. And we will never truly realize the vision of the founders unless Member States agree to provide the future United Nations system with adequate, reliable and predictable resources. Let us therefore, during this our half-century session, determine to enhance our effectiveness. Let us rationalize, let us economize. Let us pay our dues in full and on time. And let us intensify the quest for agreement on autonomous financing for the Organization and for related activities.

Above all, let us dedicate ourselves to universality and pledge to enlarge our image and re-energize the world. For that day may still be greatly postponed when our resolutions and decisions, rather than blood and iron, will summarily determine the great international questions.

But in continuing efforts at global conflict avoidance, we are still, if the Assembly will forgive the colloquialism, the only game in town. In other words, true international peace and security can only ever come by way of the United Nations, which remains the last, best hope for mankind.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Spanish):* I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Velayati (Islamic Republic of Iran) *(spoke in Farsi; English text furnished by the delegation):* May I at the outset congratulate President Freitas do Amaral of Portugal on his well-deserved election to the presidency of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations and assure him of the full cooperation of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran at this important session, which coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

Less than a month from today, Members of the Organization will assemble in this very Hall to celebrate a half-century of operation of the United Nations. Fifty years ago, when the bitter events and experience of the Second World War were omnipresent, the original Members decided to establish an organization "determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". They signed the Charter of the United Nations, the result of two months of negotiations and compromise among the participants at the San Francisco Conference, which was to serve as the framework and the guide to prevent war and promote the economic and social advancement of all nations, large and small.

However, it is generally acknowledged that shortly after the establishment of the Organization, the spirit of cooperation and friendship gave way to bloc politics and rivalry, which led to the cold war and effectively prevented the achievement of the objectives enshrined in the Charter. It would not be excessive to point to the antipathy between the two blocs as the principal cause of wars, underdevelopment of the third world, suppression of liberation struggles of nations under foreign domination, and interference in the internal affairs of

others. It was this mentality, prevalent in the bipolar world, which in effect denied the Organization the opportunity to fulfil its obligations completely, and which circumscribed the extent of participation by Member States in the decision-making process and brought about the dominance of a few countries.

After 50 years of turbulence, the United Nations is now in one of its most sensitive periods. Although many problems and obstacles of the past no longer exist, a new set of challenges have appeared, each of which has taken the credibility, efficiency, relevance and ability of the Organization to task, and which provide opportunities and responsibilities to bring into conformity the *modus operandi* of international relations in general and the Organization itself in particular, with the purposes and principles of the Charter.

Today the United Nations faces these challenges and opportunities at a time when it remains the only truly universal organization. This universality of the Organization can naturally put tremendous resources at its disposal to facilitate the achievement of the principles and objectives of the United Nations Charter, particularly the maintenance of international peace and security, the promotion of economic and social development, justice and mutual cooperation, and place it in a better position to deal with emerging challenges in a more efficient and distinguished fashion.

What should be of the utmost importance to the Organization is the extent to which Member States participate in its decision-making process. In fact, if we define and assess the universality of the Organization in terms of the wide participation by Member States in its decision-making process, and not merely in terms of the number of its Member States, and direct all our efforts to strengthening such universality, we will contribute tremendously to enhancing the credibility, authority and ability of the Organization. In other words, when public participation of all Members as sovereign States is guaranteed in decisions of the Organization and their implementation, then the possibility of the exerting of undue influence and dominance by a few States to shape the approach of the Organization *vis-à-vis* international issues according to the limited confines of their own national interests diminishes to a large extent.

Regrettably, even in the current international environment, certain Members continue to adopt unilateral actions contrary to the provisions of the Charter, and thereby exhibit an absence, for their part, of the spirit of international cooperation.

The arrogant approach and attitude of the Government of the United States of America towards the international community, and the unsuccessful attempts of the American foreign policy establishment to exploit issues of global concern, such as terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, to advance an extraneous and illegitimate agenda represent a most vivid and indeed dangerous manifestation of such unlawful unilateral measures.

The United States Secretary of State must put to rest the illusion that his Government can become both the judge and the policeman of the global community. Nor should he expect others to follow American pressures against independent States brought to bear with the sole objective of pleasing Zionist pressure groups even at the expense of disregarding the interests of the American people.

Perhaps they still do not really believe in the fundamental principle of the sovereign equality of States that constitutes the cornerstone of the United Nations and that requires each and every Member of the Organization to play its role in securing the objectives of the Charter. This mentality is unfortunately the unwelcome heritage of the cold-war period when, owing to the nature of bloc rivalries, States Members of the United Nations were viewed, not as independent, sovereign equals, but as members of power blocs. The unfortunate natural by-products of such a world view are inequality, hegemony, disrespect for the interests and spiritual values of other nations, disregard of the choices and opinions of the majority, preference for the short-term interests of the minority and self-serving interpretations of the rules and principles of international law.

It seems imperative, therefore, that in the new international political environment all organs of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, should adopt substantive and procedural measures to facilitate the full integration and participation of all Member States. The Security Council, which constitutionally represents the general membership of the Organization and acts on its behalf, should muster the requisite political will to deal with all crises on the basis of principle and the same set of standards and should avoid preference for the interests of powerful States over the interests and choices of the majority in order to discharge its responsibilities in accordance with the Charter. To

achieve that objective some structural, substantive and procedural reforms in the work of the Council, including democratization and transparency, are inevitable and will enhance the credibility, efficiency and relevance of the Council as the representative of the general membership.

At the same time, I should emphasize that the most important organ of the United Nations, the one that is the manifestation of the principle of sovereign equality and affords direct participation to all Member States, is the General Assembly. Therefore, strengthening this important organ and ensuring the accountability of other organs, particularly the Security Council, before the General Assembly will guarantee full and more meaningful participation by the Organization's general membership in its decisions and their implementation. This will go very far towards strengthening true universality and providing the most effective guarantees for the implementation of its decisions.

In the past few years, following the end of the cold war, we have witnessed increased efforts to formulate new sets of international standards in various political, social and economic spheres. A thorough review of the final documents of recent international conferences clearly illustrates that, notwithstanding the conceptual and normative transformations which the international community has undergone in the formulation and expression of its concerns and recommendations, it has legitimately stood firm on the need to respect the fundamental principles that preserve the very fabric of our diverse and pluralistic world. For instance, concepts and phrases such as "the necessity and importance of upholding full respect for the spiritual and ethical values, national and regional particularities, as well as different historical and cultural backgrounds of countries", and "the necessity of homogeneity and conformity in final documents and recommendations of international conferences with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the prevalence of a spirit of international cooperation and consensus in their implementation and follow up" have been incorporated and reaffirmed in the final documents of the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, and the recently held Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

This clearly attests to the fact that while the international community has taken it upon itself to adopt a just and non-discriminatory approach through international cooperation towards the protection and promotion of all human rights, including the right to development, as universal, indivisible and interdependent rights, it continues to insist on the absolute imperative of guaranteeing that in the process of international standard-setting, promotion and protection, the sanctity of the principle of the national sovereignty of all States is respected and that no nation's religious values and beliefs and cultural and national identity are infringed.

Furthermore, the Charter of the United Nations recognizes international cooperation in economic and social issues as necessary for the maintenance of peaceful and friendly relations between States. Unfortunately, notwithstanding this emphasis, because of the conditions prevailing in international relations, both during and after the cold war, the importance and centrality of issues related to economic and social development have not received due consideration.

In addition, at a time when the North-South gap continues to widen on a daily basis, the world economic trend, manipulated by unilateral actions and protectionist policies on the part of the developed countries, also tends further to debilitate the potential of the developing countries to deal with the adverse impacts of international economic development. In this connection, we welcome the Secretary-General's "Agenda for Development" and announce our intention to participate actively in the deliberation of it. We firmly believe that post-cold-war opportunities should be utilized to their maximum potential so as to place issues of economic and social development at the centre of the United Nations attention.

Hence, there is a renewed need for recommendations about and practical measures for expansion of the role of the United Nations in promoting the economic development of developing countries, as well as full and rapid implementation of relevant agreements and internationally agreed upon objectives in this field. In this connection, the fundamental principle that States have the right to benefit from the utilization of their own resources that are vital for their sustained economic growth and development in accordance with their national policies and priorities must not be neglected.

Another key characteristic of the post-cold-war era is the expansion of peace-keeping operations, which have, in recent years, demanded an increasing share of the energy and resources of the Organization. Nevertheless, the expansion of United Nations peace-keeping operations should not take place at the

expense of its activities in the area of development, which constitute one of the most effective measures for preventing the occurrence of tensions and conflicts as well as for ensuring tranquillity and stability. The Islamic Republic of Iran, along with other non-aligned countries, supports the United Nations peace-keeping efforts in principle, but emphasizes that all Member States that are willing and able to participate in such operations should be treated equally and without discrimination. In like manner, while a unified United Nations command structure is essential for successful peace-keeping operations, its leadership should not be the monopoly of a handful of States.

Although the United Nations has been successful in returning peace and stability to some volatile parts of the world, its disregard for some important principles has resulted in the failure of the Organization to resolve other crises that still rage. Let me emphasize that it is absolutely imperative for the United Nations fully to respect fundamental principles, including national sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States in all phases of the establishment and execution of peace-keeping operations.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, eager to contribute more actively to this growing area of United Nations activity, announces its readiness in principle to participate in United Nations peace-keeping operations in accordance with our tenets and the fundamental principles of the Charter. Here, I deem it necessary to reiterate the preparedness of the Islamic Republic of Iran to dispatch peace-keeping forces to Bosnia and Herzegovina, which we had earlier committed along with other Islamic countries to strengthen the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in order to enable it to discharge effectively its mandate to protect safe areas.

We hold the firm view that if the Security Council had at least provided the necessary mandate or committed the necessary forces for the protection of the safe areas, including through taking advantage of the assistance offered by the Islamic countries, the Bosnian Serbs could not have continued, with relative ease, their crimes of genocide against the defenceless people of United Nations-declared safe areas. However, the lack of political will to suppress aggression and to deal effectively with non-compliance with United Nations decisions, coupled with the unreasonable, immoral and legally baseless insistence by some on extending the arms embargo against the former Yugoslavia to the victim of its aggression have in fact proven to the Serbs that they can continue with impunity their murder, destruction, aggression, "ethnic cleansing" and genocide.

Since the outbreak of the crisis, Islamic countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, have adopted a constructive position and called for international cooperation in finding a just and peaceful resolution of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The recent decision of the joint meeting of Foreign and Defence Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Contact Group and troop contributing countries to establish the "Assistance Mobilization Group" in order to address the humanitarian, economic, legal and defence requirements of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina represents a proper approach to this tragedy in keeping with the principles and purposes of the United Nations.

This decision, along with the previous declaration by OIC member States of their readiness to dispatch a sufficient number of peace-keepers to Bosnia, as well as their declaration on the "*de-jure* inapplicability" of the arms embargo on Bosnia and Herzegovina are not only solidly based in international law, the United Nations Charter and humanitarian principles, but also emanate from the considered assessment that without a proper military balance, it would be impossible to compel the Serbs to engage in serious negotiations or to guarantee the unhindered implementation of any negotiated settlement.

In this connection, the Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes the recent cooperation between the two Contact Groups, and holds that only a plan which does not entail recognition of the fruits of "ethnic cleansing" and guarantees the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a Member of the United Nations can restore peace and stability to the region. Furthermore, it is necessary in any peace negotiations to accord the non-Serb populations of Kosovo, Sanjak, and Vojvodina the same rights and privileges as those requested for the Serbs in Bosnia. Moreover, in order to guarantee a durable settlement and to preclude the repetition of aggression and genocide, the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991 should continue its work resolutely, without any regard for political expediency, and severely pursue and punish those who are found guilty.

The increasing growth of inter-State cooperation within the framework of regional groupings constitutes another characteristic of the new international climate.

There exist natural common grounds for cooperation, as well as shared interests among the countries of any region, which together create a framework for the promotion of regional organizations. Such regional cooperation leads, in turn, to enhanced peace and stability in each region and the world through the expansion of a culture of cooperation, coexistence and dialogue. In this context, the Islamic Republic of Iran has emphasized regional cooperation and taken significant steps in this regard in order to enhance prosperity, peace and stability throughout its own region.

Today, the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) has grown to an organization with 10 members. With a population of 336 million, rich natural resources and considerable potential, and in close proximity to important centres of economy and trade in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, the organization endeavours to strengthen and expand its activities, particularly in the areas of transportation, communications, trade and energy, in order to achieve well-being and prosperity for the peoples of the region, and to promote trade and economic growth.

In another effort for the expansion of regional cooperation, the Islamic Republic of Iran has made concrete proposals for the establishment of the Caspian Sea Cooperation Organization which, with the participation of the littoral States, would aim for the expansion of cooperation in the fields of shipping, fishing, the protection of the environment and the exploitation of the resources of the Caspian Sea. Fortunately, the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran has been accepted by the States concerned, that is, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Turkmenistan. In our opinion, the Caspian Sea must be a sea of peace and tranquillity whose affairs will be decided by the concurrence of all its littoral States.

Considering the political and economic characteristics of our region, and the occurrence and expansion of conflicts and tensions due to internal and external factors, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran feels nationally and internationally obliged to exert every effort aimed at the enhancement of economic prosperity and regional security, the prevention and de-escalation of tension and the peaceful resolution of regional crises, based on respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, the inviolability of internationally recognized borders, and non-interference in the internal affairs of others.

In Afghanistan, while refraining from any involvement in the regrettable fratricidal war, our policy has focused on keeping channels of communication open with the Government and all Afghan groups in order to put an end to fighting and to bring about a negotiated settlement.

In the crisis in Tajikistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran has exerted every effort and has succeeded in securing negotiations in Tehran at the highest level between Government and opposition groups, leading to the signing of significant agreements concerning a cease-fire and the peace process. Attempts to find solutions to these crises require the constructive engagement of regional States and the effective participation of the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

At the same time, the maintenance of internal and regional stability and security in Central Asia and the Caucasus requires economic prosperity. The Islamic Republic of Iran, in view of the special economic and geographical situation of regional States, has tried to serve as a reliable economic and trade partner, through bilateral economic cooperation, as well as the establishment of trilateral commissions with the participation of States from within and outside the region aimed at the expansion and facilitation of trade.

Inter-State cooperation in the sensitive and strategic area of the Persian Gulf, where regional States share many commonalities, can also lead to economic prosperity, as well as guaranteeing peace and stability. The military presence of foreign Powers, who have interests at variance with stability and long-term cooperation among regional States, cannot be conducive to achieving the common objective of securing the tranquillity of this important waterway.

In the final analysis, all littoral countries of the Persian Gulf would be better served if they were to join hands in a concerted effort to maintain peace and security in the region, which will directly affect our destiny. Such efforts can be channelled through an institution organized by these same littoral States, where confidence-building measures commensurate with the specificities of the area can be devised and followed up.

Reducing military budgets, setting a ceiling for arms purchases, acceding to disarmament and arms-control treaties, cooperating with the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and devising a mechanism for

transparency in armaments are but a few examples of confidence-building measures which the aforementioned institution could consider. The Islamic Republic of Iran declares its full readiness to enter into bilateral and multilateral negotiations with its neighbours in order to reach common understandings on these issues.

In the Middle East, the Zionist entity, supported by certain powerful countries, continues its occupation of Palestine and parts of Syria and Lebanon, and persists in its policies of aggression, suppression of those who dare to express opposition to its illegal occupation, and violation of the very basic human rights of the Palestinian people.

Experience and the events of the past few years further illustrate the fact that the only viable option for restoring peace and security to the Middle East is one which is comprehensive and just and which addresses the fundamental issues of the Palestine question. Such a solution should entail a realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the return of all Palestinian refugees and displaced persons to their homeland, the full and free exercise of their right to self-determination, and liberation of all occupied territories. In view of the volatility of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, these two regions must be off limits to any foreign military presence and weapons of mass destruction. My Government continues to underscore the need to implement numerous General Assembly resolutions as well as the decision of the Review and Extension Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East as an important factor for installing stability in the region. What has actually prevented the NPT from achieving its objectives and the establishment of the Middle East as a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction has been Israel's illegal nuclear capabilities and its refusal to join the NPT and put its unsafeguarded nuclear facilities under the safeguard regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Undoubtedly, without the direct and indirect financial and technological support of certain Western nuclear-weapon States, Israel could not have acquired the capability to develop nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, there exist strong indications that the nuclear capability of that regime is being continually increased by the very same countries that are the most vocal proponents of nuclear non-proliferation. This discriminatory trend persists even in circumstances where Israeli nuclear policy has adversely affected regional security, the negative effects of which include a lack of confidence and a perception of insecurity in the region, an escalating arms race and influx of foreign weapons into the region, and the refusal of some States in the region to join certain disarmament treaties.

On the international level, it must be acknowledged that, despite the modest progress achieved in the control of nuclear, chemical and conventional weapons, these weapons have unfortunately increased qualitatively and quantitatively to an alarming degree. We are of the view that the failure of the international community to deal effectively with these weapons is primarily due to the fact that major producers of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction have prevented the United Nations from fulfilling its primary responsibility and central role in the field of disarmament. Another main reason for this failure is that the policies of major arms-producing countries designed to control the spread of weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons are always short-sighted and discriminatory and aim simultaneously at securing the destructive power of their own weaponry and their own military dominance.

A glance at generally unsatisfactory disarmament negotiations in various fields, including nuclear disarmament, the Hague negotiations on the chemical weapons Convention, negotiations concerning verification systems for the bacteriological weapons Convention, and the performance of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms make the veracity of our contention quite evident.

Following four weeks of difficult negotiations, the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the NPT could not reach the conclusion that any progress towards the primary objectives of the Treaty, including complete nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy, had been achieved in the past 25 years. The indefinite extension of the Treaty must be viewed within the framework of three major final documents of the Conference, together with the necessity for all signatories, particularly the nuclear Powers, to commit themselves to the full implementation of all provisions and objectives of the Treaty. These obligations include achieving complete nuclear disarmament, expanding the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, strengthening the role and enhancing the authority of the IAEA as the only international body competent to oversee the good-faith discharge of Member States' responsibilities under the Treaty, ensuring the universality of the NPT as an urgent priority, and establishing the Middle East as a zone free

from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In this connection, the nuclear-weapon States should, as a first step, prove their good faith by refraining from nuclear testing and finalizing a comprehensive test-ban treaty in 1996.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, inspired by the divine teachings of Islam and benefiting from national solidarity and the continued participation and efforts of its people, has endeavoured to develop a society on the basis of the dignity and worth of the human person and respect for human values, a society whose ethos includes fairness and social justice as well as cultural, social and economic development. In this regard, despite extensive damage caused by the imposed war and other economic pressures, the Islamic Republic of Iran, endowed with the resolve and work ethic of its entire population, has been able not only to move towards reversing the vast destruction of the war, but also successfully to complete its first five-year economic and social development plan and embark upon the implementation of the second five-year plan on solid foundations. We foresee bright prospects for a strengthened economic, social, cultural and political infrastructure.

Since the Islamic Republic of Iran firmly believes that the maintenance of peace and security, at the national, regional and international levels alike, is dependent upon economic growth and sustained development, we spend only about 1 per cent of our national budget on defence and devote the rest to overhauling and strengthening our economic, social and cultural infrastructures. We have made this strategic decision at a time when the bitter experience of military aggression against my country, a foreign military presence in the region and an alarming military build-up following the second war in the Persian Gulf could have justified very extensive military expenditures.

The current session of the General Assembly provides a golden opportunity for us to engage in a serious review of the performance of our Organization over the past 50 years, assess the current international situation and try to shape the conduct of international relations in the light of the United Nations Charter in a fashion that remedies the shortcomings of the past.

The most important characteristic of our world is its cultural diversity, which has enriched human civilization. The experience of the past 50 years has clearly illustrated that attempts to impose Western standards, beliefs and culture upon the rest of humanity have not only failed to achieve the desired results, but also undermine the foundations of peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding because, in spite of the appearance of championing the cause of freedom and tolerance, such an approach manifests extreme intolerance towards the values and beliefs of others.

Mutual respect for the rights, values and beliefs of all members of the international community, along with the empowerment of all nations to participate actively in the setting of international norms, the maintenance of peace and security and the promotion of economic and social development throughout the world must form the solid foundation of Member States' activities in the next 50 years of the United Nations. The Islamic Republic of Iran is prepared to fulfil its role in this respect.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Estonia, His Excellency Mr. Riivo Sinijärv.

Mr. Sinijärv (Estonia): Allow me to begin by congratulating the President on his election at this historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly. On behalf of the Estonian people, I wish him all the best this year.

Fifty years ago this body met for the first time in an effort to unite the community of nations to avoid a repetition of the carnage we saw in the Second World War. For my country, that war finally ended just last year, with the withdrawal of foreign troops from our territory. I am happy to note that tomorrow the final remnant of occupation, in the form of the former Soviet nuclear-submarine training facility at Paldiski, will be turned over to Estonian authorities by Russian civilian dismantling specialists. I take this opportunity to acknowledge Estonia's satisfaction with the Russian Federation's having fulfilled its commitment in this regard, as mandated by the agreement signed by Russia and Estonia on 30 July 1994.

Turning to the work of the United Nations, the declarations and decisions produced by recent international conferences must be integrated into the work of the United Nations as a whole. Estonia places particular importance upon the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Vienna Declaration. We welcome the extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and look forward to a successful conclusion of negotiations regarding a universal and verifiable comprehensive test-ban treaty. The importance of these and other recently concluded international agreements must be underscored through implementation.

There are a number of ways through which the United Nations can improve its performance. One of the most extensive ways in which Member States relate to the United Nations system is by way of the activities of various United Nations agencies and programmes. For this reason, reform of the Economic and Social Council is crucial and should be addressed in earnest. Member States should have greater opportunities to ensure that United Nations resources are used in an effective and efficient manner. I am referring not to a need for the micromanagement of agencies, programmes and projects, but, rather, to participation in agency, programme and project activities.

I would like to single out and commend the work of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and other regional commissions. The ECE has worked diligently to provide practical and needed support for the integration of countries with diverse histories into a cohesive regional whole. As part of continuing United Nations reform, Estonia once again urges greater cooperation between the ECE and the United Nations Development Programme.

Any discussion of United Nations reform must include the composition and functioning of the Security Council. Estonia welcomes the report of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, which, among other practical suggestions, calls for developing greater transparency and the inclusion of more Member States in decision making. Within the context of continuing debate over Security Council reform, we reiterate our support for an expanded and more effective Security Council.

In the 40 years from 1948 to 1988, the United Nations deployed 13 peace-keeping operations. In the seven years from 1988 to the present, 16 operations were begun, of which a significant number still continue. There are many systemic reasons for such a dramatic increase in peace-keeping operations, and the issues of both peace-keeping and peacemaking call for further detailed examination. Regional peace-keeping efforts that are conducted under the auspices of the United Nations must remain under stringent United Nations control.

The Security Council, in turn, must carefully define and monitor any mandates granted to regional efforts and must resist attempts by groups of States or individual countries to wrest authority for such actions. Only in this way can the United Nations ensure compliance with the principles of multilateralism and impartiality in order to conduct peace-keeping operations that are not only effective, but also politically neutral.

Estonia is proud to be taking part in peace-keeping efforts. Through generous support, especially that of the Danish Government, Estonian peace-keepers, for the first time ever, took part in United Nations peace-keeping operations. Having participated in the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), and now the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO), we look forward to expanding our role in United Nations peace-keeping activities.

I am gratified to support the working arrangement between the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the former Yugoslavia. Estonia regards the United Nations-mandated NATO air strikes in recent weeks in Bosnia as an unfortunate but necessary means of bringing about an end to the fighting which is still taking place there. Recent cooperation between the United Nations and NATO shows that despite the inherent difficulties in supporting peace in the former Yugoslavia, differences can be overcome and a joint approach to peace-keeping can be agreed upon. We view this cooperation as a harbinger of greater effectiveness in future United Nations peace-keeping efforts.

An area to which Estonia attaches particular importance is the work of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. José Ayala Lasso, and the Centre for Human Rights in Geneva. In keeping with its open-door policy towards the work of human rights groups, Estonia welcomes and supports the work done by the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights. We believe that information about the work of the Commissioner and the Centre should be made available to a wider audience through more frequent publication of the results of investigations. This would help ensure that the efforts of partisan political concerns that tend to rely on inaccurate information will be countered by factual, impartial reporting of the sort that Mr. Ayala Lasso and the Centre provide.

During this United Nations fiftieth anniversary year, it is important for every Member State to affirm its financial commitment to the United Nations. Estonia, for its part, supports recent changes to the methodology used to calculate assessments, changes which have led to reduced distortions and affirmation of capacity to pay as the primary, transparent and universally applied criteria by which assessments are calculated. Agreed upon regular budget assessments and peacekeeping dues are collective responsibilities for the functioning of the United Nations, and should be put ahead of individual partisan interests.

We face new challenges on this, the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. I wish all of us the best in meeting those challenges, so that the next 50 years may be even more constructive than the last.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: Two representatives have requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that, in accordance with decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Gaussot (France) *(interpretation from French)*: Several delegations mentioned the question of nuclear tests. Their statements have prompted the French delegation to recall the facts and to put the last series of tests by France in perspective that of a complete and final halt to nuclear testing.

The carrying out by France of the current programme must be regarded as what it is: a completion; the tests will be limited to eight at most and will be finished before the end of May 1996.

Above all, our primary objective is to achieve in 1996 the conclusion of a truly meaningful test-ban treaty - that is, banning all nuclear-weapon tests and all other nuclear explosions.

The major problem is the scope of such a treaty. As the Assembly knows, on 10 August last at the Conference on Disarmament France announced that it endorsed that objective and formulation.

This choice is of capital importance. I repeat that if the treaty is signed in accordance with General Assembly resolutions France will refrain from all nuclear-weapon tests and all other nuclear explosions. This is the zero-option choice, which gives full meaning to the signing of the comprehensive test-ban treaty.

But to achieve that, to bring the negotiations to that conclusion, France must be able in the short time set - before the end of May 1996 - to be sure, for the future, of the reliability and security of its weapons and acquire independent command of simulation techniques.

This programme to complete our tests will allow France to be the advocate for the most satisfactory and exacting option for the test-ban treaty.

This programme does not harm the environment; internationally renowned experts have recently demonstrated the harmless nature of our tests.

This programme is in accordance with the law and France's commitments: extreme restraint is not a ban, and we had never ruled out the possibility of our completing this series of tests.

Finally, as the Assembly knows, the International Court of Justice has just ruled in France's favour by rejecting, on 22 September, the claims made by certain States.

Mr. Azwai (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: In speaking this morning of terrorism and the threat it poses to the lives of people, the United States Secretary of State mentioned sanctions imposed by the Security Council against my country because two of our nationals have been suspected of being involved in the Lockerbie incident. Mr. Christopher made the irrevocable judgement that my country had a hand in this tragic incident. This linking of my country with terrorism and the Lockerbie incident by the leading diplomat of the United States of America has been repeated on several occasions.

The United States indicts and condemns even before any trial. Members of this Assembly should know that that is the main reason why my country does not agree to the extradition of the suspects to either the United States or the United Kingdom. Both these countries are adversaries, and have repeatedly condemned the suspects before trial.

My country has repeatedly condemned terrorism in all its forms. We have also declared our readiness to participate in any international effort aimed at combating and eradicating terrorism. The fact is that my country is a prime victim of terrorism. The United States itself has practised various types of terrorism against us, from the imposition of embargoes to military provocations in our territorial waters and overt aggression against our peaceful cities under the cover of darkness - let alone its sheltering of ungodly extremists trained in the United States to carry out acts of sabotage inside Libya, with the assistance of United States authorities.

My country strongly supports the Arab League initiative for trying both suspects by Scottish judges in accordance with Scottish law at the International Court in The Hague. We are committed to having the suspects stand trial at that Court. We are also committed to pay any compensatory damages if awarded.

We also reserve the right to sue the United States, the United Kingdom and the United Nations, if the suspects are acquitted, for compensation for the damages caused. If the United States Secretary of State is serious about combating terrorism, he must accept this initiative, ask the Security Council to lift and revoke the unjust sanctions imposed on my country, end the American boycott, and start negotiating to find solutions to the problems between the two countries and normalize relations in the interests of both the Libyan and the American peoples.

The meeting rose at 7.05 p.m.